

# CHANNEL PACKET

RAYMOND MORTIMER



1949

RECEIVED 1949

*Third Impression*

THE HOGARTH PRESS  
37 MECKLENBURGH SQUARE  
LONDON, W.C.1  
1943

*First Published December 1942*

*Second Impression January, 1943*

*Third Impression February, 1943*

Distributed in Canada by our exclusive agent, The Macmillan  
Company of Canada Limited, 70 Bond Street, Toronto

824  
510R

This book is produced in complete conformity  
with the authorized economy standards

*Made and Printed in Great Britain by  
The Garden City Press Limited, at  
Letchworth, Hertfordshire*



## CONTENTS

PAGE

1.	BROWNING	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
2.	PERSIA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
3.	BISHOP THIRLWALL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
4.	THE VICTORIAN AGE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27
5.	VIRGINIA WOOLF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32
6.	VICTORIAN PAINTERS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36
7.	MRS. THRALE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	41
8.	DR. JOHNSON AND MRS. THRALE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46
9.	INTRODUCTION TO BALZAC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	58
10.	QUEEN VICTORIA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	62
11.	GIDE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	67
12.	MACAULAY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71
13.	GENERAL BOOTH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75
14.	GEORGE HERBERT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80
15.	ANCIENT ROME	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	84
16.	ARCHBISHOP MAGEE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	88
17.	PROUST	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	93
18.	LANDOR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	97
19.	MR. GLADSTONE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	102
20.	BEACHCOMBER	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	104
21.	DR. ROUTH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	107
22.	A. E. HOUSMAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	111
23.	A HOSTESS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	120
24.	SUICIDE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	124
25.	MATTHEW ARNOLD	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	128
26.	THE GREVILLE MEMOIRS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	132
27.	MALLARME	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	148
28.	MR. EZRA POUND	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	151
29.	THE DEVONSHIRE HOUSE SET	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	155
30.	LADY BESSBOROUGH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	158
31.	RANDALL CANTUAR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	162
32.	CHARLES KINGSLEY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	167
33.	TWO GERMANS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	169
34.	GENERAL BOULANGER	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	174
35.	DR. JOHNSON'S VERSE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	179
36.	LYTTON STRACHEY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	184
37.	THE AMBERLEY PAPERS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	189
38.	PAST PLEASURES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	194
39.	AUGUSTINE BIRRELL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	196
40.	SOUVENIRS D'UN TOURISTE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

DEDICATION

*To the staff of the London Library  
in gratitude for  
their erudition, their efficiency, and their politeness.*

## PREFACE

On my passport, now alas so superfluous, I describe myself accurately not as an author but as a journalist. There is no humility in this declaration: a succession of hundred-yard sprints demands no less effort than a cross-country race. In my experience as an editor I have found good journalists more scarce than good authors. For while the author can justly expect readers to approach his book in privacy and with settled attention, the journalist must immediately command and then retain the curiosity of readers in a casual mood, probably in public. He has, as it were, to raise his voice and buttonhole the reader, in the face of competing attractions not only from neighbouring articles but from the landscape visible through the railway-carriage window or from the cheekbones of the girl sitting opposite. The author can afford to place flat passages in the architecture of his book; but the journalist must keep the restricted surface he is filling continuously lively.

This volume is not a book, but a selection of papers and reviews reprinted from periodicals—*Horizon*, *La France Libre*, and *The New Statesman and Nation*. I would beg the reader therefore to show his gentleness by taking the contents in small doses, like a medicine, tonic, I must hope, and not disagreeable to the taste, but probably emetic if swallowed at one draught.

I am proud to consider myself not only a journalist but a highbrow. Puzzled by this term of abuse, a visiting French author is said to have asked for explanations; and then to have exclaimed "I understand. A highbrow is a person who prefers good books to bad ones." I would suggest further that the highbrow is a person to whom the past and the present are similarly significant and vivid. Many people can like only the newest tunes and the most recent books; others can respect nothing that is not familiar and consecrated by time. The highbrow, I hope, seeks to base his judgment on non-temporal values, and is indifferent to mere novelty or antiquity. Those who claim to enjoy Picasso but not Poussin, seem to me as untrustworthy in their taste as those who claim to enjoy Poussin but not Picasso. The highbrow depends upon the standard of excellence set by the masterpieces of the past, but does not expect their methods to be imitated in the masterpieces of the present.

It has been my business to write about paintings hardly less often than about books. But in this collection I have included little about the visual arts; and about another principal pleasure, travel, I reprint only an article written in French for

*La France Libre*, which, by the side of papers on French authors, is intended to express a profound and confident love for the people of France.

I have called this collection *Channel Packet* because, like the Dover-Calais steamboat, my reading runs daily between France and England; and also because these two words conjure many of the happiest hours of my life, spent on the deck of a Channel Packet anticipating the delights of being once more upon the soil of France. I should like to believe that from my long frequentation of French literature I have caught some habits of mind which shew in these pages; and it is to the indulgence of others who love what is French that I particularly address "un livre comme je ne les aime pas"—to quote Mallarmé—"ceux épars et privés d'architecture."

Mr. G. W. Stonier and Flight Lieutenant T. C. Worsley have helped me with many excellent suggestions, and I am also profoundly indebted to Sir Edward Marsh, whose knowledge, taste, and eagle eye have saved me from a great number of solecisms.

## BROWNING

IN a rapidly mobile civilisation like that of Western Europe since the Renaissance, children usually react against the tastes of their parents. Consequently, it often happens that, if a writer is appreciated in his lifetime, his reputation starts sinking soon after his death, and does not emerge from the trough of the wave for some fifty years. Browning, who died in 1889, seems to me due for rediscovery. Thirty years ago I learnt to love him from a lady for whose stimulating sympathy with a schoolboy I can never be grateful enough ; and I have remained a belated enthusiast for this poetry which most of my contemporaries and juniors neglect or despise. Hardy, who has similar faults, they exalt. It cannot be Browning's obscurity that alarms admirers of Hopkins and Eliot ; it cannot be his carelessness that shocks admirers of Spender and Auden. He might, indeed, be thought to commend himself to current taste by his wit, his colloquialisms, and his quickness to seize on images from contemporary life. (He was the first poet, I fancy, to refer to photography and to use the word " cocktail.") Let me quote from *Confessions*, to show how much he has in common with some modern writers who have been quicker to learn from him than to praise him :

What I viewed there once, what I view again  
Where the physic bottles stand  
On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,  
With a wall to my bedside hand.

That land sloped, much as the bottles do,  
From a house you could descry  
O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain blue  
Or green to a healthy eye ?

To mine, it serves for the old June weather  
Blue above lane and wall ;  
And that farthest bottle labelled " Ether "  
Is the house o'ertopping all.

Why, then, is it that contemporary taste cannot admit Browning? I suspect that the chief cause may be his notorious " optimism." Over-production may be another trouble—the

1,500 odd pages of the old dark-green collected edition are calculated to quell any unguided reader. I would therefore hopefully recommend a slim volume of selections.\* In 176 pages here is almost all the best of Browning, and if Sir Humphrey had omitted the eleven pages of prose, good though this is, he could have found room for the five or six poems that one most sorely misses, *Porphyria's Lover*, *Youth and Art*, *The Statue and the Bust*, the omitted parts of *Waring*. The book is well annotated and well printed, besides being well selected. And my only grave complaint is that some of the "appreciations" might profitably have been replaced by a quotation from Santayana's most damaging criticism, *The Poetry of Barbarism*.

I cannot believe that any reader of this selection will find optimism the prevailing note. On the fifth page, it is true, "God's in his heaven," you may read, "All's right with the world"—and you may then bury the book disgustedly under a sandbag. But as Sir Humphrey points out, Pippa's song is the outburst of a labouring child on a holiday morning; and to the adulterous pair who hear it the words have a threatening meaning. Browning, however, was a devotee of the Life-Force (before the term was invented), which does make him often exasperating to a generation that comprehensibly, though shortsightedly, regards life as a bad business. We cannot, alas, catch the mood of *Prospice*; still less can we believe in the happy ending of *Instans Tyrannus*. Furthermore, the Victorians, like the Elizabethans, had a taste for "great thoughts" in verse which we emphatically do not share; and as Browning aged, he increasingly supplied this demand, although, like most poets, he was not a profound thinker. But in his best work the preaching does not usually obtrude. For this was produced—and it is no accident—when he was living in Italy, far from suet and black horsehair and Exeter Hall, responding with all the fullness of his blood to the sensuousness, animation and spontaneity of the southern scene.

Open my heart and you will see  
Graved inside of it "Italy."

In richness of temperament Browning was unparalleled among his English contemporaries. (It is possible that he had Jewish blood.) Compared with the lush but exquisite rectory-garden of Tennyson, and the nobly architected but sparsely furnished Oxford rooms of Matthew Arnold, Browning's intellectual home

\* *Robert Browning: Poetry and Prose*. With appreciations by Landor, Bagehot, Swinburne, Henry James, Saintsbury and F. L. Lucas. With an Introduction and Notes by Sir Humphrey Milford.

was a labyrinthine, ill-kept, baroque Venetian palace, crowded to the attics with curios from every age and clime, gaudy with carved and tarnished gilt, the grand staircase voluble with servants, the *piano nobile* packed with guests eating ices and gossiping through the music, while the canal flickered its reflections upon the sprawling goddesses of the painted ceiling, and you looked down under the striped awnings to a garden with a well-top of peach-coloured Verona marble and vines luxuriating over the breasts of caryatides. Fellow-feeling with the Renaissance is capital in Browning's work. His knowledge of Italian art was wider and deeper than Ruskin's (and, *a fortiori*, than Pater's). He was gigantic in his appetite for looking, listening, talking and reading; for characters, for feelings, for words. He should have been the happiest of men, and I fancy he was; in any case, I know of no writer whose gusto is more infectious. Even in *Sordello*, which I cannot read through, every page is lusty with life:—

. . . haggard ribalds wandering about  
 The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house  
 Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse,  
 Parading,—to the gay Palermitans,  
 Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans  
 Nuocera holds,—those tall grave dazzling Norse,  
 High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse,  
 Queens of the caves of jet stalactites,  
 He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,  
 The blind night seas without a saving star,  
 And here in snowy birdskin robes they are . . .

The reader is gasping for breath, but the poet and his muse remain as indefatigable as Jupiter and Alcmena. (There is room, I suggest, for a Browning anthology of a different sort, with short passages from the long poems and single lines, as in Mr. Rylands' admirable *The Ages of Man*). This impetus, this abundance of response, carried the poet with bellying and never-shortened sails to Sargasso Seas and Tuscarora Deep, where the other Victorians never ventured. I think that Browning not only surpassed his English contemporaries in his awareness of evil, but came nearer to ourselves in his sense of what evil is. A passionate absorption in life, comparable to that of Balzac, whom he greatly admired, swept him away from the primness of a Tennyson or an Arnold—look, for instance, at *Respectability*, *Confessions*, *A Light Woman*, *Two in the Campagna*, *The Statue and the Bust*. His optimism is that of the adventurer, not of the muffish recluse who averts his eyes from unpleasant facts.

According to Henry James, writing in 1890, Browning was then thought rarely quotable. We must hope that the same complaint often made about the poets of to-day will prove equally ungrounded ; for I fancy he has added more phrases to the language than any nineteenth-century writer—phrases which, like proverbs, epitomise a sentiment or a situation : “ It was roses, roses all the way,” “ Oh, to be in England Now that April’s there,” “ Ah, did you once see Shelley plain ? ” “ What porridge had John Keats ? ” “ No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best,” “ He settled Hoti’s business,” “ How sad and bad and mad it was,” “ All a wonder and a wild desire,” “ In Vishnu-land what Avatar?” “ Dear dead women, with such hair, too,” “ A fancy from a flower-bell, someone’s death, A chorus-ending from Euripides ”—but one could go on for a long while, and alas such words grow droopy from passing over too many lips. But they are tokens of Browning’s vividness, his genius for catching and holding the attention. Think of the picture of Waring’s last appearance, kingly-throated, grass-hatted, under a lateen sail off Trieste ; dip, indeed, into almost any of the shorter poems written between 1841 and 1864, and you come on some such passage as this :—

There came a hurry of feet and little feet,  
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs of song,—  
*Flower o’ the broom,*  
*Take away love, and our earth is a tomb !*  
*Flower o’ the quince,*  
*I let Lisa go, and what good’s in life since ?*  
*Flower o’ the thyme*—and so on. Round they went.  
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter  
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim shapes,  
And a face that looked up. . . .

Graphic, lively, charming indeed, you say, but not poetry ? Any definition that does not include this as rare poetry seems to me pedantic and insensitive. Browning is justly accounted a careless writer, but in his best work, including longish poems like *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Andrea del Sarto*, *In a Gondola*, *The Bishop Orders His Tomb*, his style is, to my judgment, no less well sustained than his imagination.

With one complaint against Browning I must admit sympathy. All his virtuosity cannot make attractive, as a genre, the humoresque, for which his taste persisted from early poems like *Nationality in Drinks* and *Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis* to *Pacchiarotto*, which cracks the nerves, like a bumping street-drill, with some 600 disyllabic rhymes. Sometimes one cannot but admire—



*Caliban on Setebos*, for instance, or *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, or *The Flight of the Duchess*. But one quickly tires, and, what is worse, this vein starts up painfully often in unsuitable places, like the line "Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?" in a poem about God. This had best be neglected; or endured, as a characteristic part of Browning—and of the nineteenth century, like replicas of gargoyles and Mime in *Siegfried*.

Ultimately the case against Browning may come down to a complaint that he wrote little "pure poetry." It can similarly be urged that Chaucer is less pure as a poet than Christina Rossetti, and Wordsworth than Monsieur Paul Valéry. Such puritanism is, in intention, no less impoverishing than the puritanism that whittled our cathedrals into the nudity of barracks. Admit that Browning's poetry is barbarous—has not the same accusation been effectively pressed against Shakespeare? And is it not now recognised that some of the most vital art we know has been produced by barbarians? Incidentally, Browning's translation of the *Agamemnon* (from which even Sir Humphrey shies) strikes me as much more like Aeschylus than Arnold's *Merope* is like Sophocles—as well as being intrinsically more enjoyable and more alive. "Alive" is the word with which I must end, though I should like to have stated a case for Browning as a most inventive master of verbal music. For his genius, like that of Rubens, while it affronts the ascetic, makes magnificently articulate the richness, the peculiarity, the intoxication, of being alive.

## PERSIA

WHEN the newspapers talk of Iran, my memory returns to Persia. Fars, from which the word Persia is derived, may be only one province in the Shah's kingdom, but it was injudicious of His Majesty to wish the English name changed. To our ears Iran is a word without weight, a *parvenu* word easily confounded with the new-fangled name for Mesopotamia. But Persia is a word charged with the most august associations, consecrated by

Herodotus and Horace, Chaucer, the Bible, Marlowe and Milton, a vast panorama of a word in which we see Darius and Belshazzar, Cyrus and Artaxerxes, Seleucids and Sassanians, Hafiz and Shah Abbas—immutable justice, terrifying might, inordinate luxury, and the most exquisite refinement. From veneration for its history I continue therefore to call "Persia" this country which I regard with a particular affection, because I spent there the three happiest months of my life. It is over fifteen years since from the air above the Caspian I saw the Elburz mountains dwindle into a pencil-line upon the horizon. But the nobility of the landscape, the picturesqueness of the cities and the amenity of the climate combined with the company of singularly congenial friends to leave in my memory a unique and still vivid impression of delight.

I have been refreshing my recollections by re-reading some of the excellent books written by travellers to Persia. The supreme masterpiece concerned with Persia in English literature is indisputably the free version made of the Rubaiyat by FitzGerald. Over-familiarity with this poem, which I believe to be more popular with the unbookish than any other poem in English, too often blinds us to its marvellous felicity. Omar Khayyam is considered by his countrymen a secondary writer, and if FitzGerald had been to Persia, he might have been tempted to make equally genial renderings of Sadi, Hafiz, and Jani. Except for this translation, the best work in English dealing with Persia is James Morier's *Hajji Baba*. Although easily procurable in the Everyman and World's Classics editions, this is not so well known as it should be, and I recommend it as one of the most amusing nineteenth-century books. Born in 1780, the son of a British Consul at Constantinople, Morier went first to Persia in 1808, with a British Mission intended to counteract Napoleon's attempt at winning the Shah's support. He was there off and on for the next seven years, at one time acting as *chargé d'affaires*. He wrote accounts of his travels, followed in 1824 by his fascinating novel. *Hajji Baba* purports to be the translation of an autobiography: avowedly basing himself on *Gil Blas*, Morier used a picaresque form akin to that of certain of the *Arabian Nights*. This enabled him to draw upon the whole range of his Persian experiences; and it is only after reading the book that one perceives how skilfully he has managed to introduce descriptions of the variegated customs prevailing at Meshed and at Kum, among the Yezidis and the Kurds, the Armenians and the Turcomans. Bagdad, Constantinople and the representatives in Teheran of the rival European nations are also convincingly

described as they strike the Persian eye. Entranced by the liveliness of the narrative, the reader does not notice how packed it is with information. But it must be remembered that the book is a satire : it represents the Persians as almost without exception dishonest, mendacious, cowardly, conceited, ostentatious, cruel and fanatical. Though grossly unfair, the author remains good-humoured, and one feels that his moral disapproval is qualified by natural sympathy. Persia is a medley of races, and there is little in common between the virile tribesmen or nomads and the urbane citizens of Ispahan and Shiraz. It is, moreover, not easy for a European to become intimate with the modern Persian, who has had imposed on him the xenophobia that accompanies resurgent nationalism. The distrust naturally excited by the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 has never subsided ; and while the British exploitation of the oilfields has brought not only prosperity to the Persian budget but great medical and educational benefits to the local population, the conduct of the Russians under the Soviets no less than under the Czars has been deleterious to the Persian economy. In any case, Oriental peoples intent upon learning from Europe are quicker to imitate our vices than our virtues. The deplorable results are described in *The Road to Oxiana* by Robert Byron, a brilliant and truculent writer whose death by enemy action is a loss to English letters.

To understand the signal merits of the Persian character, one should read William Browne's *A Year in Persia*. In this very engaging book the Persian is revealed as the most generous of hosts, the most affectionate of parents, a lover of fun and wit, a devotee of poetry and natural beauty.

Despite the excellent accounts of Persia by Curzon, Sykes and Arnold Wilson, many readers still imagine a land exuberant with peach trees and roses, and nightingales ceaseless above fountains in the moonlight of a perpetual summer—such is the power of poets and painters to create illusions. In fact, Persia, which is more than twelve times the size of England, consists principally of desert, in which the cities occupy small oases. Most of the country is a plateau, some three to six thousand feet above sea level, cold and often snow-bound in winter, while in summer the days are torrid, the nights agreeably cool. The national passion for gardens comes largely from their rarity and the short duration of their flowering. The plateau is broken by great mountain ranges, so that to cross Persia one must surmount a series of arid plains surrounded with peaks and divided one from another by difficult passes. The distances between the cities are very great, and some of the traveller's happiest memories

are likely to be of nights spent on the road in remote villages, where the headman provides for sleeping a whitewashed room empty save for carpets, and where a chicken, killed in honour of his arrival, is cooked for him in pomegranate juice. Tea is the national drink, but the wine of Shiraz, forbidden in principle to the Moslem, is worthy of the verses it has inspired. Early in the morning one sets out again upon the interminable road ; a tall whirlwind of sand races like a djinn across the arid soil, mirages far more plausible than anyone who has not seen them would credit bring non-existent reed-bordered lakes to within a stone's throw of the road, and fill the distance with mountains of a Leonardesque blue. The real mountains are equally beautiful and more strange, for they seem built of colossal petrified animals piled peak-high and mottled with lurid colours. The travellers' tales in the *Arabian Nights* cannot seem extravagant to anyone who has journeyed by road from Khanikin to Teheran, and from Teheran to Shiraz. Save for the absence of any but illusory water these landscapes would be the loveliest, as they are the most impressive, that I have known. One becomes aware of the immensity of Asia and the physical insignificance of the rare human beings huddled in its occasional crannies. Then by the wayside at the top of a pass one sees little piles of stones, and on the fawn horizon a smudge of green and white marks the location of Ispahan. (The Persian traveller at the first sight of his impatiently awaited goal assembles a few stones as an ancient token of thankfulness.) The overwhelming majesty of the solitudes that one has traversed sharpens one's delight in the verdure of palace-gardens, the complicated polychrome of the tiles on city-gate and mosque, the swarming hubbub of the arcaded bazaars. The Persian cities are less picturesque than those of Morocco, because the clothes are drab—and they have become still drabber, being European, since I was there—but to compensate there is architecture incomparably nobler than anything in Fez or Marrakesh, and while the Moors have detestable taste, the Persians retain something of their ancient craftsmanship so that the commonest pots are of extraordinary excellence. The only writer who has done anything like justice to the visual beauty of Persia is Miss Sackville-West in *Passenger to Teheran*.

The traveller who deplores the introduction into Oriental countries of European customs is often attacked as a sentimentalist. Possibly it is sentimental to deplore anything that appears inevitable—in which case every moralist and every aesthete is a sentimentalist. For my part I feel as fully justified when I complain about the compulsory adoption of European clothes by

the Turks and Persians as when I protest against a proposal for destroying Carlton House Terrace or Waterloo Bridge. Rulers like Ataturk and Reza have supposed that the independence of their country depended upon imitating Occidental technique, a use of power symbolised equally by the machine-gun and the bowler hat. I believe this to be a delusion. The natural resources of Turkey and Persia are not such that these nations can become industrialised like Great Britain or Germany, and their independence must therefore continue to be dependent upon the Great Powers or upon some future League or Federation. They are thus sacrificing the bone for the shadow, the dignity of their traditions for a jerry-built "civilisation" that lacks validity. We in Europe have become miserably aware of what we have sacrificed for industrialism, and even those most confident that on balance happiness has increased, feel appalled at the excessive urbanisation, the disappearance of craftsmanship, the degradation of moral and aesthetic standards. Our best poetry and fiction have become one incessant moan : how blithe, by comparison, is the general impression made by the *Arabian Nights*, which, despite the decline of Islamic civilisation, remain a generally faithful account of its daily life. One must avoid being deluded by the picturesque, one must not admire the plumage and forget the dying bird. Corruption, grinding poverty, the lack of liberty and any recourse against injustice—all these, though they have been much reduced in Morocco, are part and parcel of the immemorial East. But, in my most superficial experience of Islamic lands, the common life of Ispahan and Fez seemed happier, save in one respect, than the life of Glasgow, Düsseldorf or St. Etienne. (The exception is important : after some while in Asia or Africa, I have always found insufferable the spectacle of unnecessary corporal ills, of blindness in particular. The provision of public medical services would be otherwise profitable than the introduction of our irrational and mean costume.) The Persian climate, moreover, is such as would render industrial life intolerable. I wish that the traditional fabric could be maintained, because I suspect that the harmony visible where European influences are inconspicuous is more than superficial ; that the potter in Shiraz and the tobacconist in Kum enjoys a more harmonious life than the factory-worker in Manchester or, *a fortiori*, in Calcutta ; and that a main reason for the nostalgic memories left by travel in undeveloped countries is the sense of a society in which human beings still combine spontaneity with dignity.

## BISHOP THIRLWALL

I AM one of the diminishing band who dearly love a Bishop. And are they not remarkably imposing, in gilt frames on the linenfold panelling of College Halls, the Prelates of the Establishment, girt in the billowing majesty of rochet and chimere? One may perhaps sometimes be reminded—how inappropriately!—of glorious specimens of trout or salmon, preserved, for their superior weight, by the art of the taxidermist; for these spiritual peers have an uncommonly pampered look. And well they might have, since their revenues were princely. They could not compete, of course, with the Prince-Bishops of the Continent. Lambeth and Farnham cut a poor figure in comparison with Würzburg or Saverne, and I think no English prelate boasted a hunt of his own as well as an official mistress, as did in the Eighteenth Century the Rohan Cardinal-Archbishop of Strasbourg. But Winchester carried with it £50,000 a year, in days when money went farther than it does now, and an absentee Bishop of Derry could extract from the starving Catholic peasantry of his diocese £20,000 a year to spend on Continental travel and bogus Old Masters.

In the nineteenth century the bishoprics were less frequently accaparatred by the cadets of the great ruling families, and more regard was had to the appearances of piety. Had not the French Revolution exposed open irreligion as a grave danger to property? But the Bishops remained very rich—and very conservative. By voice and vote they resisted every possible reform, such as Catholic Emancipation, the admission of Dissenters to the University, the Jews' Disabilities Bills, the Great Reform Bill, successive attempts to repeal the Corn Laws, and the Home Rule Bills. Humane legislation, so long as it did not gravely affect the landed interest, did not usually excite their violent antagonism: they were content to absent themselves, much to Lord Shaftesbury's indignation. But they voted against abolishing the death penalty for theft, and, of course, against the opening of museums on Sunday. Indeed it is difficult to discover any reform, until recently, in which they took an active part. Can one wonder that Carlyle called them "stupid, fetid animals in cauliflower wigs and clean lawn sleeves, Bishops, I say, of the Devil—not of God—obscure creatures, parading between men's eyes and the eternal Light of Heaven"? All that is now changed. Gone are the princely incomes, the princely palaces are meagrely maintained or put to other uses, the tables no longer groan under massy viands, the cellars are widowed of their ancient wines. The last Bishop, I think, to boast of noble blood has lately died, and even

the traditional glories of classical scholarship are feebly represented on the episcopal bench. Our Bishops are become administrators, Marthas too much burdened with diocesan business to linger over the fine points of an Eclogue or even of a Burgundy. A Chichester, who can write, and write admirably, a vast biography, is almost unique. Even the delights of controversy are smothered in the press of keeping solvent a church with diminishing returns. A Birmingham, believing less than has been customary for Bishops, may feel obliged to attack those of his poorer clergy who have the temerity to believe too much ; but the Bench as a whole has wisely accepted the comprehensiveness of the Establishment, and agrees that the Prayer Book with its Catholic Liturgy and Protestant Articles was designed to include a variety of beliefs. It is now almost as safe (except in so far as preferment is concerned) to adore the Sacrament as to question the Divinity of Christ. And with decreased revenues has come a decreasing conservatism : there is probably not a Bishop in the House who does not deplore the political record of his predecessors. They are anxious now in the interest of better housing, of democracy, of peace. But while their enlightenment has increased, their influence and stature have dwindled. How many Bishops are alive whose names even are known to the general public ? But the prelates of the nineteenth century were among the most striking figures of that enigmatic age. Consider the frigid Howley, the pugnacious Phillpotts, the logical Whately, the politic Blomfield, the eloquent Magee, the learned Stubbs, the adroit and humane Wilberforce, the devout King, the intellectual Creighton, the apostolic Selwyn, the erastian Tait, the ceremonious Benson, the autocratic Temple, the sagacious Davidson—they were men salient by their energy and singularised by their characters. The inevitable contest between the ideals of the Gospel and the requirements of ecclesiastical statesmanship gives to their lives a peculiar and ironic interest. The contest, it is true, was usually unconscious, for awkward scruples may well find a sedative in the exquisite atmosphere of an English cathedral. The silvery intoning of collects and litanies and the dulcet concent of choir and organ purify prayers and hymns from any over-urgent meaning ; in so general a manner and so sonorous a prose do we confess our sins that they scarcely seem sinful ; and the flawlessly performed ceremonial, stripped of the sacramental Presence that gives to the most pompous Roman function an awful significance, seems designed to transport us into an ideally comfortable world, where there is nothing disquieting, unseemly or actual.

The life of a great Victorian Bishop has been written by an American member of his family.\* Born in 1797, the son of a curate, he was comparable in precocity with J. S. Mill, for he read Latin at three, Greek at four, and when he was eleven a volume of his verses, moral tales, and sermons was published which enjoyed very favourable notice. Charterhouse, Cambridge and a Continental tour during which he came under the influence of Baron Bunsen, continued his education. He was called to the Bar, and showed his interest in advanced biblical criticism by translating Schleiermacher's *Luke*. In 1827 he was ordained, in order to retain his Trinity fellowship, and returned to the College, where he guided the steps of Monckton Milnes and the first "Apostles," Tennyson, Hallam, Stanley, and Maurice. Unorthodox, and at this time only dubiously a Christian, he was inspired by a fiery love neither of God nor of his fellow-men, he merely required leisure to write. "Society," he explained, "possesses two or three strong stiff frames, in which all persons of liberal education who need and desire a fixed place and specific designation must consent to be set." This view of the Church as a gentlemanly career was not unusual, but soon he gave real ground for complaint. A pamphlet in favour of the admission of Dissenters to the University, in which he attacked compulsory chapel, infuriated the orthodox. Christopher Wordsworth, the Master of Trinity, demanded his resignation with what Macaulay called "unutterable baseness and dirtiness." Thirlwall obeyed, but was swiftly rewarded by the Whig Government with a rich living, and devoted himself to writing a history of Greece. (Grote was simultaneously at work on the same task, and the respective merits of the two histories were energetically canvassed. To-day they appear almost equally unreadable.) In 1840 Melbourne gave Thirlwall the Bishopric of St. Davids, to the consternation of conservative churchmen. He was a good scholar in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Dutch, Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, and now he learnt Welsh, the first occupant of his See since the Reformation to attempt this very necessary task.

His biographer admirably sums up his career :

Practical irony dominated Thirlwall's life as it filled his writings. He was morally forced into the four "frames of society" which he filled. Hating the law, he studied it for six years ; contemptuous of the clerical profession, he took Orders to teach at Cambridge ; not designed for parochial work, he was given a fat benefice after

\* *Connop Thirlwall*. By John Connop Thirlwall, Jr.



his expulsion from Cambridge : Liberal in politics and unorthodox in theology, he was induced to abandon all his scholarly productivity for a bishopric in the National Church.

In his earlier years he seems to have seen in Christianity little more than the philosophy of his favourite Cicero purveyed in a form more effective and possibly more refined. Nor did he ever attain any feeling for the mysteries of the Faith. (But I think, from his writings, that he later came sincerely to a more definite churchmanship than his biographer allows.) Thus admirably suited to the Established Church of the eighteenth century, he found himself rather isolated in his own time. As a diocesan he was unsuccessful. The Welsh clergy and parishioners were unintellectual, ungentlemanly, and often drunk. "His horror of the manners of his flock soon grew into a horror of their persons, and, brutally frank as he was, he took small pains to conceal his contempt." The story went that the Bishop was accompanied by a large dog trained to know and bite curates. Freezing and repellent to men who did not share his intellectual interests, he was devoted to animals and children, and walked out in the harshest weather to feed his favourite geese. The last years of his life were sweetened by a friendship with a charming and accomplished girl, Miss Betha Johnes, and a selection of his letters to her, edited after his death by Dean Stanley under the title *Letters to a Friend*, may be recommended as remarkably agreeable reading to anyone interested in the Victorian *Stimmung*. He never married, and almost the only personage to excite him to passionate admiration was Alexander the Great ; but the Bishop of Winchester wrote of him that "for all the vast power and intellect which he possessed, and that habit of speaking strongly which he sometimes exhibited, his heart showed all the feelings, almost the sensitiveness, of a woman." Above all, his was the saving, if unchristian, grace of irony. The story remains of a dinner-party at which his neighbour had to repeat some banal observation several times before it penetrated to Thirlwall's failing ears. "When the Bishop finally grasped the remark he dignified it by remarking *sotto voce* 'Strange, how little one loses by being deaf!'"

Thirlwall succeeded the casual Bathurst, and anticipated the strenuous Percival, as a solitary supporter of Liberalism on the Bench of the Bishops. Alone among them he supported in 1845 the Maynooth Grant ; alone he voted in 1869 for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church. His maiden speech in 1841 was in favour of the admission of Jews to civil rights, and he was more tolerant even of the Tractarians, than most of his fellows

though he voted for Dizzy's foolish Public Worship Regulation Act. Mr. Gladstone, despite his detestation of Latitudinarianism, declared that his was "one of the most masculine, powerful, and luminous intellects that have for generations been known among the Bishops of England." The annual charges with which he bewildered the bucolic clergy of his diocese were widely prized as the most weighty and thoughtful of episcopal utterances. They are read now by only the most determined of antiquaries. The tolerance that was the positive contribution of Broad Churchmen like Thirlwall, Stanley, Arnold, and Hare, has triumphed, but they are disqualified for the sympathy of most Anglicans by their blindness to the poetry and pragmatic efficacy of the traditional Christian mysteries. What Thirlwall would have considered superstition has proved more fruitful in works than his sedate rationality. And Bishops who outdo him in Latitudinarianism are now happy to be censured and to vest themselves in mitre and cope or even chasuble. This scholarly, well-written and well-proportioned *Life* of Thirlwall therefore appears (as indeed did Thirlwall himself) fifty years too late. Lancelot and Pelleas and Pellenore are hardly more remote from us than Hoadly and Harcourt, Phillpotts and Thirlwall. But does not this remoteness lend to the majesty of lawn sleeves a new and as it were romantic charm? Mrs. Proudie in her crinoline is evidently picturesque, and I should like to see a ballet made of *Barchester Towers*. Now, when the literature of escape is more than ever necessary, how soothing to take refuge among faded controversies in the company of these extinct but thoughtful, vigorous, and dignified mammoths.

## THE VICTORIAN AGE

MR. G. M. Young's essay at the end of *Early Victorian England*, a summing up as brilliant as it was judicious, received from critics the applause which it deserved.\* The first 102 pages of his new book are a reprint of this essay: in the remaining 85 pages he describes, considers and judges the Late Victorian Age.

\* *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age*. By G. M. Young.

He explains shortly, moreover, his conception of what history should be. He is so old-fashioned as to believe in the desirability, and even, it seems, in the possibility, of "the disinterested mind." I admit to sharing this illusion :

In the daily clamour for leadership, for faith, for a new heart or a new cause, I hear the ghost of late Victorian England whimpering on the grave thereof. To a mature and civilised man no faith is possible except faith in the argument itself, and what leadership therefore can he acknowledge except the argument whithersoever it goes ?

One seems to detect in him a nostalgia for the old agricultural society, with squire and parson as the focal points of its orderly ellipse. But any prejudices that he has he keeps in admirable control, and I could find hardly a detail on which to challenge him, unless it were his theory that the Dilke divorce deprived Liberalism of the leader it required. Dilke had intellect, energy, knowledge and integrity, all in a remarkable degree. But he was heavy and pedantic, a walking Blue Book ; and no bore, I think, could ever be the successful leader of a progressive party.

I also venture to disagree with—perhaps because I cannot understand—his definition of "the final and dominant object of historical study" as "the origin, content, and articulation of that objective mind which controls the thinking and doing of an age or race, as our mother-tongue controls our speaking." This pronouncement seems to me opaque. By "objective mind" does he mean more, I wonder, than that certain ways of thought and feeling may in a particular time and place become widespread and markedly influential ? What does in fact emerge from Mr. Young's book is not a Procrustean portrait of a mind (objective or otherwise), but the impression of a bustling and anarchical luxuriance, which he has illuminated with occasional generalisations, but upon which he has been too wise to impose an interpretation. This impression is perhaps aggravated unnecessarily by the absence of chapter-headings. The reader never knows where he is being led, nor can he with any convenience refresh his memory of what he has been shown, for there is no index. A patient reader, armed with pencil and notebook, could doubtless work out the logical plan of the structure ; but most people will merely admire confusedly the vast variety of beautifully ornamented elevations erected by Mr. Young's wit and erudition.

He does, however, make very clear that there are two main periods in the reign, and between them a time of transition. (The watershed comes somewhere in the Sixties.) The subtitle of the book, indeed, might be *Portrait of Two or Three Ages*.

When we think of all the forces, all the causes at work in the sixty-three years of her reign : with how few of them she was in sympathy, how few she understood ; we must find it ironically strange that Victoria should, by the accident of a youthful accession and a long reign, have been chosen to give her name to an age, to impose an illusory show of continuity and uniformity on a tract of time, where men and manners, science and philosophy, the fabric of social life and its directing ideas, changed more swiftly perhaps, and more profoundly, than they have ever changed in an age not sundered by a political or a religious upheaval. If the Queen, and not Prince Albert, had died in 1861, we might have set against each other the Victorian and Edwardian ages, and seen in the contrast the most striking example in our history of pacific, creative, unsubversive revolution.

The most prominent feature of the Early Victorian Age was a prodigious increase in population, in riches, in order, and in puritanism. The boisterous Hogarthian disorder of the Georgian reigns disgusted and appalled the Evangelical bourgeoisie which was becoming the dominant class. In 1835 the stink of the Thames at Westminster, Mr. Young tells us, still made it impossible to keep open the windows of the House of Commons. And " with 250,000 vagrants on the pad and all the village idiots at large, the unprotected female really had something to be afraid of." Mr. Young explains the importance of the enquiries and Blue Books of the Thirties and Forties in the work of social sanitation. (I have sometimes wondered whether olfactory sensibility did not suddenly become more acute, remembering that under Lewis the Fourteenth the staircases at Versailles were used as latrines.) Cleanliness, in any case, suddenly was placed next to godliness : the middle classes imposed neatness on the proletariat, and religion upon the aristocracy. " Lord Hatherton used to say that in 1810 only two gentlemen in Staffordshire had family prayers ; in 1850 only two did not." By no effort of sympathetic imagination can we enter the minds of the pious (and " progressive ") millowners who worked small children fifteen hours a day, and resisted with righteous indignation all attempts to stop this monstrosity. Mr. Young admirably says of Victorian England that " its practical ideals were at odds with its religious professions, and its religious belief was at issues with its intelligence." For my part I think that the disgust which this hypocrisy arouses now is entirely justified, and I continue to read Lytton Strachey's books with unabated pleasure. But great material reforms were certainly carried through by the Early Victorians, and they did not invent sweated labour. It spread

hideously in their time, but it was an inheritance from the age that we are agreed to call "polite."

The difference between the Early and Late Victorian Ages is largely a difference between optimism and disquietude. Business men grew richer and richer, the British Empire set its bounds wider and wider, but Macaulay's philistine complacency was replaced by the shrinking bewilderment and fastidious alarm of Matthew Arnold. (This bewilderment was found only among the intellectuals.) "O life unlike to ours!" he cries to the Scholar Gipsy (and he might have been addressing the less romantic figure of Macaulay),

Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,  
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,  
And each half lives a hundred different lives;  
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

What had intervened? "Darwin" would apparently be Mr. Young's answer. But Macaulay did not believe any more than Arnold in the infallibility of Scripture—he merely did not worry about his disbelief.

"As Early Victorian thought is regulated by the conception of progress, so the late Victorian mind is overshadowed by the doctrine of Evolution," Mr. Young writes; and adds, "But evolving what? . . . A Socratic search for the good had begun again." Ruskin, Browning, George Eliot, Matthew Arnold—the variety of creeds and questionings was enormous. "Representative institutions and the Family were the only beliefs not debated or assailed." And here we come close to one Victorian feature which to-day seems specially surprising. One can understand that the Victorian rationalists had to go again over all the arguments about the Scriptures and the Church as if Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists had never existed: the Evangelical and Tractarian movements had intervened, and moreover there were new arguments to serve up, based on geological and biological discoveries. But one can less easily understand why they stopped so far short of their predecessors in their conclusions and moral philosophy. There were no apparent grounds for supposing that the survival of the fittest could be identified with the survival of the chastest; indeed natural selection depends upon prodigal and usually promiscuous seeding—yet the Victorian agnostics were almost more sternly puritanical than their adversaries. And they were correspondingly indignant when churchmen very logically pointed out that the rejection of supernatural sanctions must lead to a rejection of the specific morality de-

pendent upon those sanctions. Here we come very close, I think, to an important Victorian *differentia*. Sir Leslie Stephen, substituting long walks for long prayers, and Alps for sanctuaries, but as severe as Pusey in his attitude to pleasure, is in his earnestness equally remote from the Eighteenth-Century Gibbon and the Twentieth-Century Strachey.

It would, of course, be a mistake to suppose that the Victorian *Stimmung* was ever all-enveloping. Mr. Young might have pointed out that Peacock survived till 1866, the year in which Swinburne published his *Poems and Ballads*, and Pater his essay, at least equally shocking, on Winckelmann. Here we have the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries joining hands, as it were, in the very heart of the Nineteenth. It was, in fact, the aesthetes (and the financiers), not the agnostics, who did most to break up the Victorian nexus. Oscar Wilde was brought down by Victorianism, but not till he had gravely wounded it. It can still pop up its pretty head, as we often have occasion to observe; in the provinces, and still more in the Dominions, taste in pictures (and in other matters) remains very Victorian; but when "good society" flocked to a play punningly entitled *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the decline of the Earnest Age became apparent.

Mr. Young's book is remarkable alike for its concision and its comprehensiveness; it covers public health and private morals, education and agriculture, art and economics. It is packed with fascinating illustrations of his theme. (And though he inspires complete confidence, it is regrettable that he gives so few references.) Let me tear from their context three of the small significant facts which he uses so effectively:

Kingsley (who described Shelley as a lewd vegetarian) correctly diagnosed Byron as an Evangelical gone wrong. Byron's objection to mixed bathing, even when the parties are married, as "very indelicate," comes from his Venetian period. . . .

"I want," said Bella Rokesmith to her husband, "to be something so much worthier than the doll in the doll's house." In the profusion of Dickens, the phrase might pass unnoticed. But Ibsen remembered it. . . .

In 1873, on the death of Mill, a public memorial was proposed. The story of his Malthusian activities was revived, and Mr. Gladstone ostentatiously withdrew his support. . . .

The erudition that enables Mr. Young to draw upon an apparently inexhaustible supply of such details is allied with an admirable talent for summarising a situation:

The incidents and circumstances, too, of this life: its durable furniture and stated hours; its evening reading and weekly

churchgoing ; its appointed visits from and to the hierarchy of grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins ; a life which did not vary in essentials whether the holiday was spent at Balmoral or Broadstairs ; gave to those who were within it a certain standing with themselves, and a cheerful confidence in the face of novelty, which is perhaps the clue to the Victorian paradox—the rushing swiftness of its intellectual advance, and the tranquil evolution of its social and moral ideals.

Victorianism is a subject dangerously vast for a short book, impossibly vast for a short essay. But I hope that I have quoted enough to show that *Victorian England* is a book which all who are interested in history or literature must read. And they will find this obligation a pleasure.

## VIRGINIA WOOLF

I HAVE been reading a posthumous volume of essays by Virginia Woolf, entitled *The Death of the Moth* ; and, with it, Mr. E. M. Forster's Rede Lecture upon her, a summing up exemplary in its shrewdness and delicacy. He had known Mrs. Woolf intimately for many years, and began by discounting the legend, invented by some glorious ass of a reviewer, that presented her as The Invalid Lady of Bloomsbury : " She was full of interests, and their number increased as she grew older, she was curious about life, and she was tough, sensitive but tough." These new essays alone are enough to show her variety of mood and thought. We listen to her envisaging the Sussex of five hundred years hence ; analysing the work of George Moore and Mr. Forster ; wandering through the streets of London ; discussing professions for women—" the cheapness of writing-paper is, of course, the reason why women have succeeded as writers before they have succeeded in any other profession " ; asking why undergraduates still go to lectures, though the printing press has been invented these many centuries ; portraying Gibbon, Sara Coleridge, and Henry James ; going to the theatre ; watching a dwarf buy shoes ; teasing the young poets of to-day for wishing to publish their poems (as if all young poets had not always, and very naturally, wanted an audience) ; jeering at the Middlebrows in a burst of pride and high spirits ; contemplating in the microcosm of a moth the enigma of death and of the impulse to live.

"She respected and acquired knowledge," Mr. Forster continues, "she believed in wisdom." One of the new essays is a letter in which she defines the Highbrow as "a man or woman of thoroughbred intelligence who rides his mind at a gallop across country in pursuit of an idea." That is why, she adds, she always has been so proud to be called a Highbrow. The daughter of Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf was by heredity an intellectual, although sometimes her imagination could play old Harry with her logic. Nobody could have more regard for the life of the mind, and specially the art of letters. She loathed humbug, priggery, everything ready-made or second-rate. "She is a poet, who wants to write something as near to a novel as possible." Here Mr. Forster takes us to the heart of the critical case. Granted that she wrote supremely well—and in my opinion nobody has ever written finer prose—how good was she as a novelist? The argument often rages, and, as in most arguments, your conclusion must depend upon your definition. In 1919 she attacked the method of the Edwardian novelists, Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy. For all their skill and high-mindedness, "life escapes," she declared, "and perhaps without life nothing else is worth while."

Life, it seems, is very far from being "like this." Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms. . . .

Life, she concludes, is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. The first published fragments of *Ulysses* were the occasion of this sortie, but it is a defence not so much of what Joyce had done, as of what she was engaged in doing. And three years later she published *Jacob's Room*, the first of her novels to use the technique later perfected in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*.

We are fascinated, even at a tenth or twentieth reading, to know what her father will say when Lydia Bennet elopes, how the Sanseverina will treat the perjured Prince of Parma, how M. de Charlus will take Mme Verdurin's snub. It is much more difficult to maintain our interest in the sensations and images that the sound of a lawn-mower, the glimpse of a kingfisher or of an old riding-crop, send swimming into the fancy of a wraith. And though, when Virginia Woolf is writing, such things become absorbing, our interest in them differs from that excited by the great novels; it resembles rather, in tempo and



volume, the interest we take in De Quincey, in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal*, in Cowper's letters, or even in a *Helicon* of Elizabethan songs. "Let your rhythmical sense wind itself in and out among men and women, omnibuses, sparrows—whatever come along the street—until it has strung them together in one harmonious whole." This is the advice she gives to a poet, but does it not define her practice as a novelist? If the youthful Miss Austen, the apprentice Balzac, had been warned that the art of fiction was a matter of depicting "a luminous halo," "an incessant shower of innumerable atoms," imagine their bewilderment.

It was, I fancy, because her talent was of a different metal, that Virginia Woolf sought to deflect the tradition of the novel from its dependence upon situation and character. She declared that she was immeasurably curious about human beings:

I always sit next the conductor in an omnibus and try to get him to tell me what it is like—being a conductor. In whatever company I am, I always try to know what it is like—being a conductor, being a woman with ten children and thirty-five shillings a week, being a stockbroker, being an admiral, being a bank-clerk, being a dressmaker, being a duchess, being a miner, being a cook, being a prostitute.

Though she tried to know, I think she rarely succeeded. For one thing, the very fineness of her temperament prevented her putting herself effectively in other people's shoes. She knew by report, but with not an atom of fellow feeling, what it was to delight in ostentation, to seek sexual promiscuity, to revere the conventions. Balzac and Tolstoy and Proust did not merely describe such emotions, they could experience them imaginatively. "The great novelist," she writes, "feels, sees, believes with such intensity of conviction that he hurls his belief outside himself, and it flies off and lives an independent life of its own." Virginia Woolf's curiosity about the people she met was, moreover, always apt to be quickly satisfied by the force of her own fancy. Before she had penetrated any distance into the life of the admiral or the dressmaker, she had already formed images of them, immense inverted pyramids wavering above the slenderest foundation of fact. Her characters, therefore, however artfully silhouetted by a few details, are fugitive and wraith-like; they bob up for a moment brilliantly lit, but we are not given the illusion of their having a life off the stage, experiences other than those fragments she describes.

In these new essays she often recurs to the gulf between fact

and imagination. She is in the street on a winter evening looking into a jeweller's :

Let us choose these pearls, for example, and then imagine how, if we put them on, life would be changed. It becomes instantly between two and three in the morning ; the lamps are burning very white in the deserted streets of Mayfair. Only motor-cars are abroad at this hour, and one has a sense of emptiness, of airiness, of secluded gaiety. Wearing pearls, wearing silk, one steps out on to a balcony which overlooks the gardens of sleeping Mayfair. There are a few lights in the bedrooms of great peers returned from Court, of silk-stockinged footmen, of dowagers who have pressed the hands of statesmen . . . Strolling sedately as if he were promenading a terrace beneath which the shires and counties of England lie sun-bathed, the aged Prime Minister recounts to Lady So-and-So with the curls and the emeralds the true history of some great crisis in the affairs of the land . . .

You may protest that the aged Prime Minister is a romantic figment derived from some novel by Disraeli, but I think that here she is laughing a little at her own flights. "Is it the true self," she is left wondering, "this which stands on the pavement in January, or that which bends over the balcony in June? Am I here, or am I there?" In another essay she decides that "words are not useful" :

A useful statement is a statement that can mean only one thing. And it is the nature of words to mean many things. Take the simple sentence "Passing Russell Square." That proved useless because besides the surface meaning it contained many sunken meanings. The word "passing" suggested the transiency of things, the passing of time and the changes of human life. Then the word "Russell" suggested the rustling of leaves and the skirt on a polished floor ; also the ducal house of Bedford and half the history of England. Finally, the word "Square" brings in the sight, the shape of an actual square combined with some visual suggestion of the stark angularity of stucco.

This is the confession of a poet rather than a novelist : the imagination is shown bolting, like a horse with the reins over its head. No wonder that one comes on inaccuracies that would have appalled Mr. Arnold Bennett—champagne bottles are opened with a corkscrew, syphons crop up in just the places where syphons never show their heads, in the clubs of St. James's Street.

Yet the defect of Virginia Woolf's novels is not that they are unrealistic. They succeed in representing our daily experience of life more closely, one may think, than any other novels.

But nobody nowadays would suggest that it was the artist's business to give the closest representation of either facts or appearances. The scrupulous notation of reflected colour in a late Monet is little more satisfactory than the detailed information provided by an early Millais. And if the novels of an Arnold Bennett sink under the weight of fact, Virginia Woolf's float upwards and lose themselves in a delicious, veracious, but unsubstantial shimmer. "She reminds us," says Mr. Forster, "of the importance of sensation in an age which practises brutality and recommends ideals." I doubt whether sensations have ever been more keenly communicated; but a novel made almost entirely of sensations is like a painting in which colour and texture are unsupported by drawing. For this reason the example and the advice given by Virginia Woolf to novelists seem to me unlucky. To complain that her novels are not like other novels is foolish, but the method she invented was suited only to herself.

Reading *The Death of the Moth* and re-reading the two volumes of *The Common Reader*, I even wonder whether these may not be her most certain successes. Furthermore, a short paper on Mme de Sévigné gives one a notion that she might have made a masterpiece of the life of some such figure—Mme de Sévigné herself, or Horace Walpole, or Pepys, or Fanny Burney. She had an extraordinary sense of the past; and while the remoteness in time would have given a freedom and a romantic stimulus that she lacked in her admirable biography of Roger Fry, the volume of given facts would have leaded the keel beneath the racing spread of her sails. I have said that nobody, in my opinion, has written finer prose. One envies Virginia Woolf, as one envies Watteau or Renoir, the power of seeing the world so beautiful—her eye "breaks off little lumps of emerald and coral as if the whole world were made of precious stone." Her handling of words keeps pace with her vision, and Mr. Woolf reveals that she revised eight or nine times even her more casual articles. "She liked writing," Mr. Forster says, "with an intensity which few writers have attained, or even desired." Her work, one feels, was a lark as well as a religion. The result is a freshness unparalleled. By comparison the other writers of imaginative prose appear laboured or pompous in their gait. The care she took ends in an appearance of spontaneity such as one finds elsewhere only in diaries and letters. Her talk was the best to which I have listened; and perhaps, indeed, one might define her style as a power to give the permanence of art to the spoken word without dimming its flicker or thumbing its bloom. This style transfigures our surroundings, like the light of early morning;

and we catch from it a new power, whether we are strolling through the streets or reading for ourselves about the dead, of selecting, as Virginia Woolf did, details that are significant or intrinsically delightful.

## VICTORIAN PAINTERS

AN excellent book by Mr. Gaunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy*, has left me feeling inquisitive about other Victorian painters, particularly Landseer and Frith. These were the two chief butts of the Pre-Raphaelites, though to-day, when one compares *Derby Day* with *Farewell to England*, the similarities seem more striking than the differences. I wish that Mr. Gaunt would give us a book rescuing from deserved oblivion the idols of the Royal Academy. How few of us now know anything of Maclise and Martineau, Phillip and Egg, Leighton and Tadema? Their pictures, it is true, retain only a period interest, a dusty, pathetic appeal like that of a stage jewel worn by Rachel, a case of stuffed birds, or a musical-box that whispers rustily a Cremorne valse. But the social scene in which the painters toadied and bargained and swaggered is beautifully comical.

Never has "art" brought such magnificent rewards as during the Victorian heyday. The successful painter, usually of humble origin, sauntered leonine from one stately home to another, shooting with a railway promoter, hunting with a duke, stalking with a Prince Consort. Alone with him in palm-houses, beautiful women—such was his prestige—almost forgot to be modest; and the most parsimonious manufacturers competed, *tête baissée*, for the products of his brush. On Sundays in the Season a procession of landaus blocked the road before the palatial mansion he had built; and in a studio embellished with armour and tapestries the Academician received, with discriminating deference or condescension, the most eminent statesmen, scientists, and authors. When the first Varnishing Day came, he hastened anxiously to discover where his works had been placed; and, if necessary, he could rapidly heighten their colour to place the neighbouring pictures in the shade. (The R.A. had the right to show eight pictures, all "on the line.") The exhibition opened, and a prince of painters could hope for the ultimate

glory—the erection of a railing in front of his picture to protect it from the enthusiasm of the crowd. (Frith applied for and obtained this rare privilege six times.) Often the exhibits had already been sold, sometimes even before they were painted. *The Railway Station* fetched £4,500; *The Monarch of the Glen*, £7,245. Frith chronicles the immensely increased prices his pictures always brought when re-sold by their original purchasers: what shares, he insinuates, could have brought a fatter profit? But in the long run, Ichabod, such masterpieces have proved the worst of investments. I know of a *Rosa Bonheur* bought for £4,000 that was sold recently for £60, the value of the gold-leaf on its massive frame.

May not these Victorian glories know a revival, somebody asks? I doubt it—but not because of any very firm faith in the taste of posterity. Indeed, the sense of quality is likely to become increasingly rare in a world presumably dominated by machinery, cinematographs, and the popular press, a world, moreover, in which public bodies will be the only important purchasers. But the taste of the uninstructed is always for novelties, not for what similarly innocent persons liked in the past; and so I see no more future for Landseer and Leighton than for the popular novelists who were their contemporaries, G. P. R. James or Mrs. Lynn Linton.

Strangely and regrettably, there is no adequate life of Landseer. Born in 1802, the son of an engraver, he became a pupil of Benjamin Haydon, who with wasted fervour implored him to study the Elgin marbles. When he was thirteen, he had a picture accepted by the Royal Academy; five years later he won fame with his *Alpine Mastiffs Reanimating a Distressed Traveller*. He was elected an A.R.A. at 24, an R.A. at 29. He won the interest of the Queen, who entrusted him with the portraiture successively of little Princess Victoria's macaw, of "trusted gillies and keepers," and of her royal self. A frequent guest at Balmoral, he gave the Queen lessons in etching. But his prodigious success, we are told, deteriorated his character. *The Times* proclaimed that he was the Shakespeare of dogs. He became stiff with his old friends, he frequented only the powerful, he affected an aristocratic drawl. Later, when his sight began to fail, he took to brandy, and became subject to hallucinations. He never married, and the rumour of his engagement to Rosa Bonheur seems to have been based merely upon a public sense of what would be fitting. He had, I think, marked talent, and in an earlier age might have been an honourable painter of the third order. But he lived during the *débâcle* of the painting tradition, and swam downstream.

"If people knew as much about painting as I do," he once remarked, "they would never buy my pictures." He died at the age of 71, leaving £200,000.

About Frith we are better informed: he wrote three volumes of *Reminiscences*. He outlived not only his powers but his reputation, and died, I believe no longer rich, at the age of 90. He was born in 1819, his father holding what he calls "a position of trust in the family of the then owner of Studley Royal." Probably he was the butler, for he later became the landlord of an inn. When he asked the young William if he would like to become an artist, the answer was "I don't much care about it . . . I should like to be an auctioneer." The father, however, was obdurate; young Frith was pushed into painting; and at the age of 23, having already sold a picture for a hundred guineas, was commissioned by Dickens to paint Dolly Varden and Kate Nickleby. He never gave up costume-pieces, but in 1854 he discovered his *forte*, the anecdotic painting of contemporary life. His first essay in this sort, *Ramsgate Sands*, delighted the Queen, who purchased it and had the painter presented to her. "I retired from the presence of Royalty as soon as I could do so with propriety: but not before I had experienced the truth of what I had often heard, namely, that the Prince Consort and the Queen knew quite as much about art as most painters." The professional critics, on the other hand, impressed Frith by their ignorance, and he soon made it a rule never to read a word they wrote. Frith, who considered Ruskin "a mountebank," had no sympathy with all the fashionable talk about the Italian Primitives. "He who misses Siena will not miss much besides dirt and discomfort"; and Botticelli "so often disfigures his pictures by bad drawing and worse painting, and by such a revelling in ugliness—notably seen in his 'Venuses' in our collection—as to make it a wonder to me how admirers can be found for them." "Impressionism in which neither drawing, colouring, nor truth in any form appears, I pass by with the contempt it merits." Frith was ignorant, but not without modesty. About one of his pictures he notes: "Of course, alas! it is inferior to the old masters in every quality. It is a good thing as times go."

*Derby Day*, a portrait of Dickens, *The Railway Station*, *The Marriage of the Prince of Wales*, *The Road to Ruin*, *The Race for Wealth*, *The Private View*—triumph followed triumph. "Try to do better," Frith noted in his diary in 1868, "get newer subjects—all depends on subject." Accordingly he offered as much as two hundred pounds as a reward to anyone who provided a

subject he could use. Mr. William Whiteley was one of the many who hurried to make a suggestion: *Whiteley's at Four o'clock in the Afternoon.*

I should leave it to your discretion, sir, to choose either the inside of the place or the outside. If you take the former, you would have the aristocracy making their purchases. You might introduce the young ladies who do me the honour to assist in my establishment, many of whom are very pretty. Then there are what are called shopmen, with fine heads, and every conceivable detail for your back and foregrounds.

Mr. Whiteley concluded by saying that never in his life had he spent a shilling on advertising. Mrs. Maxwell (the popular novelist, Miss Braddon) offered an even more startling theme:

*Scene I.—THE HUSBAND'S FRIEND*

A Queen Anne drawing-room—Afternoon Tea—Wife in tea-gown—Winter fire-glow—Children at play on hearth-rug—Husband introducing college friend.

*Scene II.—THE TEMPTATION*

A conservatory—Wife in ball-dress—Husband's friend on his knees, his face tragic with the great struggle—A ball-room and dancers seen through curtained archway.

*Scene III.—THE MOTHER'S FAREWELL*

Nursery—The two children asleep in their cots—Wife in travelling-dress, or in ball-dress with fur cloak thrown over it—Bends over boy's cot, taking her farewell—Lover in shadow of threshold.

*Scene IV.—THE RECOGNITION*

Bois de Boulogne or Champs Elysées—Husband and children walking; older now—Wife passing in carriage—The eldest girl recognises her mother and tries to go to her—Father holds her back.

*Scene V*

South of France—Wife dying in hotel bedroom—Husband summoned to the bedside—Lover seated in balcony, back turned towards the room, head resting on folded arms—Blue sea, palm trees, etc.

"Alas," says Frith, "I feared to undertake the subject . . . I think I know my public; 'tis a strange hodge-podge, tolerant of grossness in Hogarth, but intolerant—properly so, I think—of an approach to details by a modern painter, such as the great moralist found necessary to enforce his lessons." (He had indeed been severely censured for depicting a lady, seen at Homburg, in the act of lighting a cigarette.) A little late, he perceives his objection may reflect upon Miss Braddon, and hastens to explain: "I need scarcely say that Mrs. Maxwell is incapable of proposing any such drawbacks . . . but I confess I shrank from the painful-

ness of her subject." His friend Egg was less timid, and it would be interesting to know whether the three pictures upon a similar theme in the Tate were the result of Miss Braddon's suggestion.

Talents that in any other age would, one suspects, have brought only a modest living, secured for these painters an affluence and a social elevation such as few even of the greatest artists have enjoyed. Here is one explanation. The art-collecting of the eighteenth-century aristocracy had given pictures a prestige value even greater than that of diamonds and pearls, because they were tokens not only of wealth but of culture. The rapidly rising industrial bourgeoisie understood nothing of art, but required pictures, no less than plate, parks, and equipages, to support their position and gratify their pride. The objects in gilt frames, provided by a Frith or a Landseer, possessed the prestige-value of works of art, and at the same time—unlike the smoky canvases of Domenichino or the Carracci—were easily understood. The painters thus prospered by a sort of *legerdemain*, enabling their customers simultaneously to buy what they liked and to suppose they were buying what would do them credit. It is to be noticed, however, that the aristocrats of the period, despite their Grand Tours and inherited masterpieces, became almost equally eager victims of this unconscious fraud. Similarly in our own time grandees have habitually had themselves painted by Laszlo, and have hung the sad results among family portraits from the pencils of Van Dyck and Gainsborough. The truth; one fears, is that only a very small proportion of any class at any time, whatever their education, care genuinely for painting. A Frith could not have passed unimproved through the training of a Renaissance or eighteenth-century artist; but the tasteless rich of an earlier period, it must not be forgotten, managed to console themselves with the hardly more valuable productions of a Gerard Dou. I suspect that whenever good taste has prevailed in a civilised society, a few artists and cultivated bourgeois have been chiefly responsible.

### MRS. THRALE

ON May 28th, 1777, Mrs. Thrale made an entry in her commonplace-book :



I had a White Hat on lined with Pink—the Weather was hot & the Room we sat in full of Windows—Sister says Lady Lade surely you have got a Mushroom on your Head—but no wonder here—for I'm sure this is a House they might grow in.

How is it, I ask myself, that these trivial words give me a shock of pleasure as acute as if they were great poetry? They fire a whole train, I suppose, of memories, associations, and images. First, there is the prettiness of Mrs. Thrale under her big round hat sitting in her grand room with the sun pouring in; then her sister-in-law, Lady Lade, makes just the remark that sisters-in-law always like to make; next I see, in the Streatham background, Johnson twisting his fingers, stamping his feet, overbearing everyone by his vehemence in argument; and Thrale solemnly gorging his green geese and his pineapples; and Fanny Burney, small, censorious, quiet—a model for Miss Austen's Fanny Price, but fifty times cleverer; and behind these Burke, Garrick, Goldsmith, Reynolds, Baretti, Boswell, Mrs. Montagu—a widening circle of figures in whose company I delight. Such one-sided friendship with men and women of the past is one of the few pleasures that increase as one passes through middle age. Our friends die, we make few new friends, but we fall back upon intimacy with those who cannot be taken away because they are dead long since. I count Mrs. Thrale among my favourites. She has not the delicacy of Mlle de Lespinasse or Lady Bessborough, the gentleness and beauty of Mme Récamier, the resolution and intellectual power of Mme de Staël. But she is gay, intelligent, spontaneous, well-informed, brimming with curiosity and the love of life. A widow of 43, she married a man of her own age with whom she was in love: whereupon her daughters, her closest friends, Dr. Johnson and Fanny Burney (to both of whom she had been immeasurably good), and most of her acquaintances, would have nothing more to do with her. Thrale had been selfish, dull and licentious; Piozzi was amiable, animated and, it appears, faithful. But it was thought socially unpardonable for the widow of a brewer to marry a professional musician. Even though Mrs. Thrale displayed her passion with a vigour unsuited to her years, the conduct of her friends reveals the vulgarity of the values accepted by a society in many ways charming and civilised.

In 1776, when she had been married thirteen years, Mrs. Thrale was given by her husband six blank quarto books in which to write what struck her fancy. The French miscellany called *Menagiana* was one of the most popular books of the time (it can still be recommended to the bookish), and it had many

successors in France. Dr. Johnson advised Mrs. Thrale to follow this example. She persevered in filling these blank pages for thirty-three years, till the death of her second husband. And now for the first time the manuscript has been printed in two noble volumes by the Clarendon Press and edited by an American scholar with exemplary care and discrimination.\* No book so interesting to the lover of the English eighteenth century has appeared for many years. Another American, Mr. J. L. Clifford, recently gave us an admirable Life of Mrs. Piozzi (Oxford Press), in which he used some of this material : Hayward also had access to it for his bad edition of her letters. But less than one-fourteenth of the manuscript has been previously printed.

The *Thraliana* begin as a collection chiefly of anecdotes and occasional verses, but they grow more intimate as the years pass, and the writer pours into them, as into a diary, her desires and hopes and fears. As we read, therefore, we watch a long panorama of the period, composed of the details that struck a clever and perceptive woman, and at the same time we watch the woman herself, mercurial, indignant, witty, plaintive, inquisitive, and—as we all are, when alone with our thoughts—comically vain. The verses for the most part are matter for skipping. Mrs. Thrale herself protests that the book is madly selected, and awkwardly put together ; but the oddity adds vastly to the charm. Whereas Horace Walpole writes always with an eye cocked on posterity, Mrs. Thrale is an impulsive woman caring only for what strikes her at the moment. She knew French, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek, and some Hebrew. She was interested in domestic economy and natural history no less than in literature and history. She notes frequently the varying prices of food. “Eggs four for one Shilling only in Bath Market, and Beef Mutton &c the *coarse Pieces*, 9d. o’ Pound Veal at 11d.½ God mend all !!!” She notes the weather—as a rule, characteristically, its remarkable fineness ; she notes the appearance of the first lilac, the first cuckoo ; she makes experiments to discover the longevity of the Domestic Fowl. “Why,” she cries, “will Buffon so roundly affirm the Impossibility of taming a Hyaena ? I have myself seen one so tame that I stroaked it.” We know already how observant she was from the excellent Travels she published but the *Thraliana* reveal her observation as it were on the wing. She is no less acute about herself than about her friends :

My Mind is an active whirling Mind, which few Things can stop to disturb, & if disturbed, it soon recovers its Strength & its Activity.

\* *Thraliana*. Edited by Katharine C. Balderston.

I have a great deal more Prudence than People suspect me for . . . when I err, tis because I make a false Conclusion, not because I make no Conclusion at all. When I rattle, I rattle *on purpose*. . .

The Pleasure of recollecting past Conversations endears even mute Objects to one's Mind, and I love the dwarf Apple Trees My Mother planted better than all the Woods of Fontainebleau. When she was asked—before she met Piozzi—if she had ever been in love :

With myself said I, & most passionately. when any Man likes me I never am surprized, for I think how should he help it ? when any Man does *not* like me, I think him a Blockhead, & there's an End of the matter.

Her accounts of Thrale convince—good-tempered, slow to take offence, extremely reserved, not loved by his servants, “very partial to his wife's understanding tho' little tender of her Person.” She made a general rule never to object and seldom to propose. He refuses to hurry even when she is about to miscarry, and he cuts down her trees though he knows she would “lose both her ears as willingly.” She thought him “nearly the handsomest Man in England,” while he regulated his venal loves, and told her so, by the rule of which girl was most in fashion. He brought on his death by gluttony. Mrs. Thrale's comment upon the subsequent sale of the brewery reveals her constant pride in her birth :

I have by this Bargain purchased Peace & a stable Fortune ; Restoration to my original Rank in Life, and a Situation undisturbed by Commercial Jargon, unpolluted by Commercial Frauds . . .

At once everyone wants to marry her—everyone except “my dear, my delicate, my disinterested Piozzi.” Already she is in love with him, as Fanny Burney has told her. She dismisses him to Italy to please her daughters ; she grows ill with misery ; she recalls him. And just before the wedding, she writes : “If I am blest with obtaining the Man . . . the only Man I ever could have loved, I verily believe it will be only because the Almighty will not leave such Virtue as his—unrewarded.” Was ever writer so deliciously unguarded ?

The obloquy with which her odious daughters treated her second marriage provoked her to return their contempt :

When I looked at the Alehouse in Harrow Corner where my first Husband told me he was born . . . I could not but admire at the Insolence of his Daughters pretending to despise a Woman of my Birth Talents & Fortune as unfit to keep them Company. Good Heavens what a World is this !!

Yet she suffered. “So wise, so good, so amiable,” she says of

Queeney, "Did she but love *me* as I do her, or half as well! how much happier we should be!" Affronted by so many of her old circle, she decided that English people were "most agreeable abroad." Nevertheless she continued to entertain: "Mem: we have always had some Nobleman in Company on our Wedding Day Dinner." Then there was the pleasure of Brynbella, her new house in Wales, of scribbling in verse and prose, of writing handbills to save a poor Dwarf from changing his Show-Box for a prison, of adopting a nephew of Piozzi's. He must have been a good husband, for she seldom voices a complaint. But the world was going from bad to worse. She groans over the "modish vice," deploring the *mœurs* of Mrs. Damer, Horace Mann, and Cardinal York. And the French Revolution encourages her maggot for Scripture Prophecy: "Will *my* Explanation come true? will their Anarchy end in a *Decemvirate*, to make out the *Ten horns* which hate the Whore, & hurt her, & eat her Flesh, & utterly burn her with Fire? It looks promising enough to be sure. *Nous verrons.*" Thus she grew older. Her friends died—so did "Warren the Cheese Monger, the deaf & dumb Fish Boy, with poor Mrs. Cooper who sold greens . . . Oh Frightful Times! Oh horrible Occurences! Everyone going, going, going: & I have just got a new Bed Chamber *Clock*—how foolish!"—whereupon she improvises yet another set of stanzas. But she lived for twelve years after *Thraliana*, still busy with jottings, and gave a ball, at which she danced, on her eightieth birthday.

Most of the material in *Thraliana* about Dr. Johnson was used, not always very accurately, in the *Anecdotes* which are so important a supplement to Boswell. But these invaluable volumes contain new information—so much indeed that it requires an essay to itself. Her notes on Fanny Burney are a useful corrective to the accounts of their friendship in Mme d'Arblay's Diaries. At first Mrs. Thrale found her touchy in a fashion explicable by her low breeding:

Her Conversation would be more pleasing if she thought less of herself . . . she makes me miserable in many Respects—so restlessly & apparently anxious lest I should give myself Airs of Patronage, & load her with Shackles of Dependence—I live with her always in a Degree of Pain that precludes Freindship—dare not ask her to buy me a Ribbon, dare not desire her to touch the Bell, lest She should think herself injured.

Then Fanny becomes a paragon, "a saucy, spirited little puss but such dignity. I respect her above all living women." Then again, "I sometimes think Fanny Burney treacherous, but tis a sinful Thought & must not be indulged." At last comes the

break. If indeed this was made, as Fanny avers, by Piozzi, I can only applaud his wisdom. For she was, I am afraid, a snob, a prude, and a sly-boots.

This book is a Potosi from which one could dig almost limitless riches. We hear Dr. Burney remark, "Saucing Musick with Dancing is like sweetening a Pine Apple with Treacle"; and Goldsmith, "Every Young Person setting out in Life should learn to love Gravy, I have known a Man disinherited merely for not loving Gravy." Of Burke, Mrs. Thrale records that he was "the first man I had ever seen drunk, or heard talk Obscenely—when I lived with him & his Lady at Beaconsfield among Dirt Cobwebs Pictures and Statues." Here, too, is a story new to me:

Says a Gentleman who listen'd while Sterne was abusing Matrimony—Come, Come, Jesus Christ once honoured a Wedding with his presence—but between You & I replies Sterne, that was not the *best* thing he ever did.

To delight in such trivia may seem bizarre, or even frivolous, to those in whom anxiety for the future has bred indifference to the past. In the stress of a social and technical revolution many feel no longer the continuity of history. But there is in the world, there always has been, too little innocuous happiness. And those can count themselves lucky, I think, who, stragglers perhaps from a vanishing civilisation, retain a community of feeling with the amiable dead.

## DR. JOHNSON AND MRS. THRALE

If I had met Dr. Johnson, I should not, I fear, have had the sense to like him. (Doubtless he would have liked me even less.) Even if I had preserved myself by silence from one of his monumental snubs, I should have complained that he was overbearing, reactionary, bigoted, and grossly insular. When Boswell took issue with him, Johnson, one notices, was in the wrong nine times out of ten. Moreover, whenever you were getting the better of him in an argument, he resorted—unless you happened to be a Bishop—to a schoolboy rudeness. It would have been

small consolation to be told of his divine kindness to poor Mrs. Desmoulins, to the uncouth Levett, to blind, peevish Mrs. Williams, to his negro servant, and to Hodge, his cat. "We are told," he once pronounced, "that the black bear is innocent; but I should not like to trust myself with him." Whereupon Boswell heard Gibbon mutter "I should not like to trust myself with *you*." Horace Walpole declared that Johnson's manners were sordid, supercilious and brutal: "with all the pedantry, he had all the gigantic littleness of a country schoolmaster." Though I hope I might have listened with more amusement and less disgust, I cannot flatter myself that I should have been more acute than Horace Walpole and Gibbon. But the dead are the most unexacting of friends—they can never be rude to you, or sulky, or even unpunctual. And now that he is as safely separated from me as are the bears on the Mappin Terraces, with a fosse of a hundred and seventy years between us, there is nobody I frequent with more delight than Dr. Johnson, and Boswell's *Life* is my favourite book in English prose.

He is at least as witty as he is wrong-headed—who ever said so many good things? One hears the deep bow-wow of his voice emerging in an eruption of granite from the great bent convulsive frame. A scintillation of fancy plays among the lapidary phrases. His character, more vivid even than that of Falstaff or Charlus (who similarly are better to read about than they would have been to meet), lends interest to his most casual comment. How exciting therefore to be presented at this time of day in the newly printed *Thraliana* with important new material about him!

Mrs. Piozzi used these notes in her commonplace-book as a basis for her lively *Anecdotes*. Boswell, as jealous as any favourite of the Grand Turk, accused her of "extreme inaccuracy," but in composing his own masterpiece he seems to have been no more punctilious. He attributes moreover to Johnson a number of disobliging remarks about Mrs. Thrale; and, as Professor Balderston points out, the Boswell Papers from Malahide Castle offer no authentication for any one of these passages. (They may, however, be true—most of us say things about our friends that we should be sorry to see recorded.) The editor of *Thraliana*, who has taken immense care to collate all the parallel passages, concludes that Mrs. Piozzi took considerable liberties with the material to give coherence to her narrative, to heighten his wit and to vindicate his judgment. She has been accused of emphasising his acerbities to exalt her own patience and to justify her break with him. But her diary now reveals how much that was disobliging she was careful to suppress.

In *Thraliana* we watch the fullness and the decline of a close and noble friendship. Johnson gave Mrs. Thrale the chance to be a literary hostess by bringing to her house at Streatham his friends Reynolds, Goldsmith, Baretti, and Burke. She did more for him. She was constantly affectionate, putting up gaily with his melancholy, his bursts of temper, the nastiness of his personal habits. An adoring mistress could not have been more patient: she consoled, she enlivened, she listened. To her—and so far as we know to her alone—he made a terrible confidence. “Our stern Philosopher Johnson trusted me about the year 1767 or 1768—I know not which just now—with a secret far dearer to him than his life.” Neither her quarrel with him nor Boswell’s jibes tempted her to reveal this “dreadful secret.” The only hint in the *Anecdotes* is one sentence: “He often lamented to us the horrible condition of his mind, which he said was nearly distracted.” Even in *Thraliana* she was careful to say little. But she said enough.

How many times has this great, this formidable Dr. Johnson kissed my hand, aye, and my foot too, upon his knees. Strange connections there are in this odd world!

In the margin she added:

A dreadful and little suspected Reason for *ours*, God knows—but the Fetters & Padlocks will tell Posterity the Truth.

He had bouts of madness, during which he trusted her to keep him in confinement.

An entry dated 1771 in Johnson’s still unpublished Pocket Diary helps to confirm this extraordinary revelation: “*De pedicis et manicis insana cogitatio.*” (Mad thoughts about fetters and handcuffs). It seems even that she may have been speaking literally when she wrote to him, “Do not quarrel with your Governess for not using the Rod enough.” For flogging was then an accepted remedy for madness—it was applied to George III. “I don’t believe,” she notes in 1788, “the King has ever been much worse than poor Dr. Johnson was, when he fancied that eating an apple would make him drunk.” Thus at last is the “dreadful secret” discovered that has excited so many conjectures. For some good reason Dr. L. F. Powell, in his Oxford Press edition of the Birkbeck Hill Boswell, discussed the “secret” without referring to this revelation in *Thraliana*, although he had read the manuscript. But I am persuaded that Mrs. Thrale was speaking the truth.

Johnson, she notes in 1774, is “more a Hero to me than to anyone—and I have been more to him for Intimacy, than ever any Man’s Valet de Chambre.” He lives most of the time in

her house, he is taken by the Thrales on tours to Wales and to Paris ; and—such is her preoccupation with him—when recording the largest ivy she has ever seen (it was at Carnarvon Castle) she adds “ It measures as thick in Timber as Mr. Johnson’s Thigh.” She thought Boswell and Dr. Burney the only other friends who much loved him ; and “ as to Burney, had they been much together, they would have liked each other less.” She was careful, she explains, to keep those parts of their characters out of sight which would have caused offence ; “ and this was made easier by Johnson’s weakness of sight and hearing.” One recognizes the born hostess.

Mrs. Thrale refers to the “ faeculancies of his low Birth,”—it was painful to watch his gross eating—and adds “ no flattery was so welcome to him as that which told him he had the Mind and Manners of a *Gentleman*, which he always said was the most complete & the most difficult to obtain.” A pleasanter picture is of Johnson, at the age of seventy, when an invasion was feared, boasting how he’d fight the French if they came. And then there are lively accounts of the parlour-games at Streatham. They played at changing places with people. Johnson said he would change with nobody but Hugo Grotius ; Burney wished rather to be Metastasio, Boswell wished to be Shakespeare, Mr. Thrale desired only to be himself. (Mrs. Thrale, who is always surprising us, wished to be Fénelon.) The Marking Game was also played, and Mrs. Thrale gave Johnson 20 (full marks) for both Religion and Morality, 19 for Scholarship, 20 for General Knowledge, 0 for Person and Voice, 0 for Manner, 15 for Wit, 16 for Humour and 0 for Good Humour. (She gave herself 17 for Worth of Heart and for Conversational Powers, but only 10 for Person, Mien and Manner, and for Good Humour.) Then they played at Analogies. Johnson, being compared to a Haunch of Venison, retorted that Mr. Thrale was Roast Beef, Mrs. Thrale a Gallina (guinea-fowl) and Fanny Burney a Woodcock. This leads to an anecdote I believe to be new. On one occasion Mrs. Thrale said to Garrick about his home at Lichfield, where he and Johnson were born, “ No town ever produced two such men,” to which the actor riposted “ I am only the Gizard, Madam, trussed under the Turkey’s Wing.” On another occasion there is talk of Burke and Fox : “ The first has more bullion,” Dr. Johnson pronounces, “ But the other coins faster.” Mrs. Thrale adds that the same might be said of Mrs. Montagu and herself. So vivid is one’s sense of Johnson’s character that even the slightest anecdotes are fascinating.



Dr. Johnson told me that at a Friend's house he had been one Evening talking over some Theological Subjects—the Room was full—a Young Lady said to him : Now pray dear Sir tell us what that Circumcision [is] we so read of—Ask your Mama to-morrow Miss said he.

One sees the ladies tittering behind their fans, the men trying to keep straight faces, everyone wondering how the sage would extricate himself ; and before the Young Lady has time to realise her *gaffe*, he makes the answer that seems obvious—but which only uncommon sense and the tact of a kind heart could in such embarrassing circumstances thus promptly dictate.

In 1779 the friendship was at its zenith. Johnson pronounced such an eulogium upon his hostess that she sat and cried almost at the hearing of it : “ To be so loved by such a Man !—who can wonder that my head is turned with Vanity ? ” Three years later, the shadows were already long :

I begin to see (now everything shews it) that Johnson's Connection with me is merely an interested one—he *loved* Mr. Thrale I believe, but only wish'd to find in me a careful Nurse & humble Friend for his sick and his lounging hours : yet I really thought he could not have existed without *my Conversation* forsooth. He cares more for my roast Beef & plumb Pudden which he now devours too dirtily for endurance : and since he is glad to get rid of me, I'm sure I have good Cause to desire the getting Rid of him.

She was intending to take her family abroad for three years to economise, and Johnson, always hostile to the then so fashionable display of sensibility, had shown little concern at the news. Such was the occasion for this outburst, but its causes were far deeper. Thrale had died the previous year. (“ After the Denunciation of your Physicians this Morning,” Johnson warned him, a few hours before his death “ such eating is little better than Suicide.”) But, as she very well knew, it was to see Mrs. Thrale, not her dreary husband, that the Doctor came to Streatham. The trouble was that she felt younger every day, being already in love with Piozzi ; Johnson, on the other hand, was rapidly growing older, and more difficult. The break did not come till her marriage in 1784, but she saw less and less of her old friend. She was indeed ill, so ill with frustrated love that her daughters feared for her life, and assented to the recall of Piozzi as the only remedy. But she dared not confide to Johnson the cause of her malady, and he suffered silently from her neglect. When, therefore, she wrote to announce her marriage, he forgot all her kindness and sent her a letter of inexcusable brutality. Her trenchant and dignified reply brought him to his senses ; kinder letters were exchanged ; but they never met again.

Five months after her marriage, Johnson died ; and it is likely that the quarrel precipitated his end. Mrs. Thrale was enjoying a prolonged honeymoon in Italy, and thinking of translating his *Lives of the Poets* into Italian. Then came the news of their author's death. "Oh, poor Dr. Johnson!!!" she wrote in *Thraliana*—the three marks of exclamation suggest that for once words failed the most voluble of women. There is a particular sadness in learning that a person whom once you loved is dead : comparing what now you feel with what once you would have felt, you consider how liquid is the personality of man, how fugacious and inconsequent his most profound emotions. But life at Milan was delightful ; she scribbled a poem about a "flying Fellow" who ascended in an Air Balloon ; there was a dinner and a concert to celebrate Signora Piozzi's birthday—"God has heard my Prayers, and enabled me to make happy the most amiable of his Sex." Besides, this whirligig of a woman was something of an artist, and she began almost at once to prepare a book about Johnson, the *Anecdotes* which are the perennial monument to a very touching friendship.

## INTRODUCTION TO BALZAC

BALZAC is now rarely mentioned in this country, and, I fancy, not much more frequently perused. Stendhal commands the unstinted admiration of modern novelists and critics to the exclusion of his great contemporary. But acutely as I admire Stendhal, I believe Balzac to be a far greater writer, just as I believe Shakespeare to be a far greater writer than Dryden ; and I am a little puzzled that Balzac should be thus neglected. I can understand that his vulgarity of thought, feeling and style should offend those who rate elegance as the highest of æsthetic qualities. But such extreme niceness of palate has always been exceptional, and is no longer even fashionable. Indeed I think that the reaction against shapeliness, polish and literary dandyism has already been pushed to excess. Why, then, is Balzac still under a shadow ? In recommending him I could base myself upon an infallible authority : Karl Marx admired Balzac so intensely that he contemplated writing a book about him.

Though many eminent nineteenth-century critics discussed Balzac, their conclusions were vitiated by a lack of historical perspective. Except the great English Balzacian, Saintsbury, they usually treated the *Comédie Humaine* as a mirror, unprecedented in its fidelity, of human society. This was indeed Balzac's own opinion. Scott had enlarged the scope of the novel by the elaboration with which he set the stage for his characters: basing himself explicitly on this example, Balzac introduced into the novel of contemporary life a far greater wealth of those details which previous novelists had thought too commonplace or too vulgar to be interesting. His avowed purpose was to describe men as the naturalist describes animals. He is therefore treated by historians as the originator of the realistic novel, the acknowledged father of Zola and the Goncourts. But now that a hundred and twelve years have passed since the name of Honoré de Balzac first appeared on a title-page, he takes his place, I suggest, as essentially a romantic genius, the most imaginative of the prose-writers produced by the Romantic Movement. Born eleven years after Byron and three years before Victor Hugo, Balzac began by writing pseudonymous novels in the style of Monk Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe. But in the first book that he signed with his own name, *Le Dernier Chouan*, Scott and Fenimore Cooper had become his models. Soon he set himself to the task of describing the whole elaborate society of contemporary France, every class and every province with their peculiarities, and the social developments from the Revolution to the end of the July Monarchy. Exhausted by his prodigious labours, he died at the age of fifty-one, before he had completed his carefully comprehensive plan. The series to be devoted to military life was hardly begun; and furthermore there are few teachers, children or peasants in the *Comédie Humaine*. Balzac is most convincing when he describes notaries, doctors, journalists, shopkeepers, commercial travellers, usurers and other businessmen—in fact the bourgeoisie that he watched expanding with such exuberance its powers and pretensions. He is no less fond of depicting grandees, fashionable tarts and criminals; but here he lets his fancy rip, almost untrammelled by observation. His plots are as extravagant as his characters, and Ouida was no less his heir than Zola. Even his bourgeois are painted far larger than life-size—how much larger you can judge by comparing any of Balzac's books about them with *L'Education Sentimentale*. Take for instance *L'Illustre Gaudissart*, a short story describing a practical joke played by the Vouvrellons upon a commercial traveller from Paris. The commercial traveller

is carved on a gigantic scale, like the cherubs ten foot high in St. Peter's. He is 'one of the most curious productions of the modern world' :

Ce pyrophore humain est un savant ignorant, un mystificateur mystifié, un prêtre incrédule qui n'en parle que mieux de ses mystères et de ses dogmes. Curieuse figure ! Cet homme a tout vu, il sait tout, il connaît tout le monde. . . .

He is compared to an actor, a human machine, a hawk, a stag, and a hot-water tap.

Combien ne faut-il pas à un tel homme de qualités supérieures ! Trouverez-vous, dans un pays, beaucoup de ces diplomates de bas étage, de ces profonds négociateurs parlant au nom des calicots, du bijou, de la draperie, des vins, et souvent plus habiles que les ambassadeurs, qui la plupart, n'ont que les formes ? Personne en France ne se doute de l'incroyable puissance incessamment déployée par les Voyageurs, ces intrépides affronteurs de négociations qui, dans la dernière bourgade, représentent le génie de la civilisation et les inventions parisiennes aux prises avec le bon sens, l'ignorance ou la routine des provinces.

And so on, till Gaudissart swells into a Prometheus, without ceasing to be comic. The supreme triumph of such aggrandisement is le Père Goriot. The celebrated story named after him has often been compared with *King Lear*. And re-reading it the other day I indeed felt that no writer except Shakespeare and Balzac ever rose to such an intense realization of human passion.

Mes filles, c'était mon vice à moi ; elles étaient mes maîtresses, enfin tout. . . . Envoyez les chercher par la gendarmerie de force ! La justice est pour moi, tout est pour moi. La nature, le Code civil. Je proteste ! La patrie périra si les pères sont foulés aux pieds. . . . Il y a un Dieu dans les cieux, il nous venge malgré nous, nous autres pères. . . . La loi veut qu'on vienne voir mourir son père, la loi est pour moi. Puis ça ne coutera qu'une course. Je la payerai. Ecrivez-leur que j'ai des millions à leur laisser ! Parole d'honneur. J'irai faire des pâtes d'Italie à Odessa. . . . Je veux mes filles ! Je les ai faites, elles sont à moi ! . . . Pas de mariages ! C'est ce qui nous enlève nos filles. . . .

It is characteristic of Balzac that there is no Cordelia to contrast with the Regan of Mme de Restaud and the Goneril of Mme de Nucingen ; and that their monstrous behaviour could not weaken their father's passion. It is still more characteristic that his Lear is not a king but a retired manufacturer of vermicelli.

The unsurpassed vehemence of Balzac's imagination is beyond a critic's power to analyse. But it is easy to perceive one of the methods by which he projected into his novels so effectively the

colossal creatures of his invention. He based his view of human nature upon a false analogy :

La société ne fait-elle pas de l'homme, suivant les milieux où son action se déploie, autant d'hommes différents qu'il y a de variétés en zoologie ? Les différences entre un soldat, un ouvrier, un administrateur, un avocat, un oisif, un savant, un homme d'Etat, un commerçant, un marin, un poète, un pauvre, un prêtre, sont, quoique plus difficiles à saisir, aussi considérables que celles qui distinguent le bœuf, le lion, l'âne, le corbeau, le requin, le veau marin, la brebis, etc. Il a donc existé, il existera donc de tout temps, des espèces sociales comme il y a des espèces zoologiques. Si Buffon a fait un magnifique ouvrage en essayant de représenter dans un livre l'ensemble de la zoologie, n'y avait-il pas une Œuvre de ce genre à faire pour la Société ?

This is the theory behind the *Comédie Humaine* : and like so many of Balzac's theories it is patent nonsense. But it rationalizes his practice of attributing to the members of these various 'species' entire subservience to ruling passions.

Each vital humour which should feed the whole  
 Soon flows to this in body and in soul . . .  
 Imagination plies her dangerous art  
 And pours it all upon the peccant part.  
 Nature its mother, talent is its nurse,  
 Wit, spirit, faculties, but make it worse ;  
 Reason itself but gives it edge and power,  
 As heaven's bless'd beam turns vinegar more sour.

The respectable antiquity of this theory of the ruling passion cannot blind us to its falsity. If indeed there be men and women dominated by a single purpose, I have never come across them ; and it is one of the superiorities that Shakespeare enjoys over a Jonson and a Molière that he did not accept, at least in his principal characters, this convenient delusion. One can maintain that Tolstoy, for the same reason, is a greater novelist than Balzac : he is incomparably more realistic—his imagination, moreover, is finely poetic, and therefore superior in quality to Balzac's. But just how useful this convention can be you may tell by the glorious effects Balzac drew from it. The single-mindedness with which his characters pursue their purposes gives them a superhuman vitality, obliging us to suspend disbelief in what is really incredible. The titanic shapes that animate with their violent chiaroscuro the Scuola di San Rocco, the elongated phantoms that writhe and flicker above the altars of Toledo, are no less foreign to our experience of the human body than are Balzac's monomaniacs to our experience of the human heart. Because he was the first novelist (at any rate in France) to des-

cribe the humblest details of furniture, clothing, physique, disease, and income, Balzac has been compared with the painters of the Dutch School. To find his parallel, we should look rather to Tintoret and El Greco.

I am not denying his prodigious skill in genre painting. The settings in which he places his monsters are elaborate to the point sometimes of tedium. His belief in the theories of Lavater encouraged him to expatiate on the temperamental significance of thin noses, deep-set eyes, and protuberant lips : a plump chin shows a woman to be amorously exacting, front teeth that cross mark their owner as a potential murderer. Similarly, in his view a house, an armchair, or a suit of clothes, possesses a physiognomy expressive of its occupant. In describing his various species of human being, he revels in cataloguing the particularities of their habitats. He anticipated Taine, indeed, in his sense of the moulding power of environment. In one of his silliest stories, *Facino Cane*, he presents himself to us mixing, ill-clad, with workmen, and watching their quarrels.

Chez moi, l'observation était déjà devenue intuitive, elle pénétrait l'âme, sans négliger le corps ; ou plutôt elle saisissait si bien les détails extérieurs, qu'elle allait sur le champ au delà ; elle me donnait la faculté de vivre de la vie de l'individu sur laquelle elle s'exerçait, en me permettant de me substituer à lui. . . .

One may be a little sceptical about these expeditions in the style of Haroun al Raschid and Mr. Tom Harrison, and at least during the seventeen years in which the *Comédie Humaine* was produced he was too busy writing to have much time for observation. As Bourget puts it, 'Balzac n'a pas eu le temps de vivre.' At the same time there is a self-revelation in Raphael de Valentin's cry : 'Je veux vivre avec excès.' Balzac attained this ambition—vicariously. With his romantic imagination he created a world complete with figures that are usually either demoniac or angelic, a world that is a distortion rather than a reflection of actuality, but none the less crammed with microscopic detail. Eugène de Rastignac and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse are not the less enjoyable because one cannot believe there was ever anyone resembling them. In his own house Balzac scribbled on the naked plaster 'Here is a veneer of Parian Marble,' and 'Here is a ceiling painted by Delacroix' ; and even when he accumulated real possessions—he was a fanatical collector—the Sebastiano, the Hobbema, the Dürer, that he so proudly exhibited to his friends were mere daubs. He lived from his imagination, just as he wrote from it.

The supreme merit of the *Comédie Humaine* is that it is exciting. We have come to look in novels chiefly for sensibility or shapeliness or style. So many thousands of bad novelists have sought solely (and vainly) to be exciting, that such an aim now appears intrinsically low. Thus those recent novelists who have succeeded in this aim—Stevenson, for instance, and Kipling and Somerset Maugham, are unfashionable with the cognoscenti. The neglect of Balzac may come largely from the same cause ; and if one says he was the greatest story-teller that has yet appeared, the fact may be admitted, but the interest aroused thereby will be languid. Only preparatory schoolboys and stockbrokers, it is assumed, are so unsophisticated as to enjoy what, with an ironic shudder, is called ‘a good yarn.’ (If, however, the yarn concerns the detection of a murderer or the bestiality of gangsters, it is mysteriously approved by the nicest admirers of Flaubert and Henry James.) In the art of narrative Balzac is incomparable for inventiveness, vitality, and persuasiveness. He mesmerizes us into accepting what is least plausible by the force of his own belief in it. A remark of his is justly famous : his friend and confidant, Jules Sandeau, having talked for some while about a sick sister, ‘Revenons à la réalité’, said Balzac, ‘Qui va épouser Eugénie Grandet ?’ Similarly his dying words were ‘Only Bianchon can save me now !’ To him Dr. Bianchon and the Grandets were more real than the persons he knew, the Princesse de Cadignan and La Torpille more irresistible than the women with whom he was in love. The characters in the *Comédie Humaine*, of whom there must be three thousand, lived for their creator with the force of an hallucination. The only novelist who has constructed a comparable world is Proust, whose scope is much narrower. (Jules Romains has succeeded in presenting an absorbing and far more plausible picture of a whole society, but how papery are his characters by the side of either Proust’s or Balzac’s !) I suspect that Balzac’s total output of words exceeds that of Scott, Trollope or Dickens, and I am certain that no other writer has produced so much good work in so short a time, for the whole of the *Comédie Humaine* (and the *Contes Drôlatiques* as well) was written in seventeen years. Parts of it I have failed to read, *Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariés*, *Le Médecin de Campagne*, *Les Petits Bourgeois* ; others I shall never again read through, *César Birotteau*, for instance, and *Ursule Mirouet*, because their great merits do not, for me, outweigh the boredom caused by the expatiations respectively upon bankruptcy-law and spiritualism. *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, again, despite the enthusiasm it excites in some good judges, I hesitate to recommend to the

reader beginning Balzac. He might find the high sentiments overdone, and certainly Mme de Mortsaufr turns her eyes too often to Heaven in the style of a Carlo Dolci Madonna. But it is a triumph of Balzac's genius to have made a whole novel of a subject so unsuitable to him as platonic love, and despite recurrent vulgarities the book is a *tour de force*. I do not care for any of the mystical excursions classified as 'Etudes Philosophiques,' *Jésus Christ en Flandres*, *Melmoth Réconcilié*, or even the brilliant, self-revealing *Peau de Chagrin*. Here the character-drawing is flimsy; moreover such subjects demand a poetic imagination, and Balzac's was essentially dramatic. On the other hand I do not mind his wildest improbabilities, so long as he avoids the supernatural. I like the *Histoire des Treize*, which contains a description of the Paris proletariat worthy of Zola, but is a thriller as wild as anything by Sapper or Eugène Sue. Honorine living luxuriously at her husband's expense can believe that she is earning her own living; Esther Gobseck can be removed from a brothel to become an exemplary pupil in a convent-school; the half-starved Baron de Bourlac can spend half his exiguous earnings on flowers to persuade his daughter that he still is rich; Vautrin can be Vautrin; and I not only accept but enjoy. My favourites among the novels are *La Rabouilleuse*, *La Cousine Bette*, *Les Illusions Perdues*, *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes*, *La Muse du Département*, and of course *Le Père Goriot*. There are at least twenty shorter works that are no less masterly, such as *Le Curé de Tours*, *La Vieille Fille*, *Gobseck*, and *Honorine*. To those who have read no Balzac I think I should recommend *La Rabouilleuse* (also known as *Un Ménage de Garçon*), which displays magnificently the author's power with few of his foibles. But each book (except some of the *Etudes Philosophiques*) enriches the impression made by the others with which it has characters in common—some personages appear in fifteen or twenty different books. Consequently one's enjoyment is cumulative. There is no particular order in which the novels should be read, but as you proceed through them, you have the pleasure of finding the protagonists of volumes you have read, reappearing as secondary characters in the volume you are reading. No single book can begin to give the measure of Balzac, because it was his genius to create a world.

All his life Balzac remained a provincial, agog at the luxury and ostentatious vice of 'cette grande courtisane,' 'le plus délicieux des monstres,' Paris. He was intoxicated by the modern: he was proud to be living in an age of unprecedented cynicism, display, and depravity. The Rome of the Borgias could not hold



a candle to the Paris of poor, clever, umbrella-carrying Louis-Philippe. He is always anxious to show off as a man of the world, and he always fails in this, because of his naive astonishment at the goings on that he describes. (One is reminded of Arnold Bennett.) After meeting duchesses, he managed still to think them different from other people. But his gusto is rewarding. *Les Comédiens sans le savoir*, for instance, hardly amounts to a story, but it is the liveliest account of a provincial's amazement at *le dernier cri* in the Paris of 1845, the tenor who earns 100,000 francs a season, the hatter who gives himself the airs of a creative artist, the unbridled luxury of a fashionable barber's shop. How Balzac must have enjoyed writing this! Continually you come upon such remarks as this about the conversation of statesmen, 'Il n'est pas de milieu pour eux, ou ils sont lourds ou ils sont sublimes.' Such nonsense is revealing—what it means of course is 'Il n'est pas de milieu pour moi.' No less ingenuous than his pose as a man of the world is his passion for parading as an encyclopædia of natural science and the arts. Apropos of anything or nothing we are treated to disquisitions on every conceivable subject. 'One learns how to play Boston whist and a card game called Loo, how to cure apoplexy, how to catch otters, how to make one's hair grow, how to predetermine the sex of children, how to disinherit illegitimate children, how to make canals, how to distinguish a disease called Polish plica.\*' He can never resist making irrelevant, ostentatious and inaccurate comments like that upon Michelangelo's sculpture: 'Cette curieuse disposition du sein dans les figures du Jour et la Nuit, que tant de critiques trouvent exagérée, mais qui est particulière aux femmes de la Ligurie.' Similarly the toad is the summary of all creation because its 'marriage' lasts longest, and Lancashire is defined as a district where women die of love. The self-confidence with which he lavished these extravagant and apparently purposeless remarks was calculated to stun the reader into acquiescence. At the same time Balzac believed in his own nonsense, not only in the phrenology and the magnetism, but in the fabulous virtues and vices he invented. He was indeed the most vigorously imaginative of all the romantic authors, for whereas the others usually had to seek their dream-world in distant times and places, mediæval Germany, the Spain of the Inquisition, among the Moors or the Iroquois, Balzac possessed the force to find in contemporary France all the necessary flamboyance of colour and violence of chiaroscuro, and to impose his vision upon the

\* I quote from Mr. Arthur Marshall's dazzling essay which appeared in *Humaniora* of June 1937.

reader's scepticism. Philippe Bridau is hardly more probable than the characters in Webster or Ford, but we accept him as if he were a character in Shakespeare. Beside Balzac, all other novelists seem pale—except Dickens, who seems callow. He imposed himself so convincingly upon his contemporaries that clubs were formed whose members assumed the names, and the conduct, of his characters—a pastime resulting in some reprehensible behaviour. To-day we may be less completely at the mercy of his mesmeric passes, and often one scribbles in the margin an exclamation-mark, meaning 'How like Balzac!'; but it is a token of his greatness that we come to delight even in his absurdities, because they are so characteristic.

Fervent as is my devotion to Balzac, he is not one of those favourite authors, like Boswell, Miss Austen, and Proust, to whose company I resort when tired or depressed; and I never look forward to starting a novel of his, though I delight in it when I have taken the plunge. The reason for this is chiefly his style. In the portraits we have of him he looks like the fat, truculent wife of a butcher, and the language he uses is no less insensitive and bloated than his appearance. His clumsiness often sinks into glaring solecisms, his floridity into parvenu pretentiousness; and when he tries to be poetical, he is usually comic. Whereas almost all the other great writers of France are distinguished by a good breeding that makes it a delight to frequent them, Balzac always talks at the top of his voice. No cliché is too common for him, no jargon too rebarbative; he is rich in graphic images and epigrams, but never offers us a beautiful cadence. He seizes you by the buttonhole, and pokes his sweaty face into yours—Zola and Dickens are the only other writers of genius that are comparable in vulgarity. But just as one can gradually cease to notice a smell, so the reader, fascinated by the matter, comes to disregard the bad manners. Balzac took infinite pains, rewriting on his proofs as often as twelve times. This seems astonishing, but the consequence is that in his best books, except occasionally in descriptions of fine sentiments or scenery, and more frequently in details of finance, he succeeds completely in what was his first object, holding the reader's attention. He is like an actor whose dramatic power gradually makes us forget his obesity, or a painter whose bad drawing is swallowed by the splendour of his colour. Indeed, so vivid are Balzac's results that one may feel unreasonable in complaining of his methods. A more disciplined and limpid style would probably fail to carry so irresistible a sense of life. Balzac impresses us like a force of Nature, a sunset or a Niagara, to which we surrender, without seeking to apply æsthetic standards.

Although he wrote often for sixteen hours at a stretch, drugging himself with coffee, while at his door printer's devils waited for their sheets and creditors for their money, Balzac never, I think, was reduced to mechanical pot-boiling. His inventiveness was inexhaustible ; when my interest flags, this is not because he is writing without conviction. On the contrary, it is because he is carried away by his obsession with some subject irrelevant to the narrative, some familiar spavined hobby-horse like the evil effects of the Code Napoléon or the Ecole Polytechnique. I do not believe that Balzac in his most hard-pressed moments ever wrote a sentence that he did not himself find interesting ; and his style, however reproachable, is the result of this impetus. Foaming, sparkling, hasty, scummy, and opaque, it is a boulder-encumbered, whirlpool-forming torrent into which you hesitate to plunge ; but, once in, you are swept irresistibly along.

Balzac's preoccupation with money produced some marvellous results, particularly the portrait-gallery of misers. (But the intending catechumen should be warned not to begin, as so many have done, with *Eugénie Grandet*, which is not, I think, one of Balzac's most exhilarating books.) Under Louis Philippe the power of money was revealed more undisguisedly than it had been since the fifth century. Balzac was naturally equipped to describe this : he personally adored the luxury that money could provide, and his life was an uninterrupted struggle with creditors. Thus he became increasingly obsessed by the dramatic value of money as a symbol of power. Covetousness is the ruling passion that he depicts with most frequency and verve. This doubtless is why Marx thought him so penetrating, and why some of us think him so blinkered. We live, as Balzac did, in a society that encourages the love of money by irrationally and indeed suicidally over-rewarding the rich. Yet men are more usually governed, I believe, by pleasure, affection, laziness, and above all by vanity and self-respect, than by love of money. I cannot think that it was otherwise in Balzac's day. He offers us, it is true, a number of characters to whom money and power are unimportant, but to these he invariably attaches the epithet 'sublime'—by which he means 'eccentric' or 'irrational.' He professes to admire them, but it is clear that he has no fellow-feeling with them, and that his conventional respect is qualified by instinctive contempt.

Consequently—and this is in my eyes Balzac's most irritating fault—the world of his imagination is peopled by two classes, clever knaves and virtuous fools. In almost every one of his novels we have to watch, with growing impatience, the good falling a prey, most unconvincingly, to the obvious machinations of the

wicked. Sometimes one can hardly bear to go on with the story : at the end of *Les Illusions Perdues*, for instance, it is only with an effort that I can continue to read of the victimization of the Séchards by the Cointets. Balzac always seems to wish vindictively to strip goodness of its prestige by coupling it with blindness and silliness. For he is not a genuine misanthrope, like Swift or Proust. He does indeed think most men are evil, but he does not hate them in consequence. Rather does he admire them, as we admire the totems of the English-speaking peoples, the lion and the eagle, for their ferocity. Nothing excites his gusto more than the relentlessness of a great man, nothing except the heartlessness and skill in dissimulation of a great lady. He is a worshipper of power, but whereas his fellow-idolater, Carlyle, with a typically English—or would his compatriots prefer me to say typically Scottish?—hypocrisy, pretends that lovers of power are good men, Balzac positively gloats over their wickedness. When Rastignac exclaims 'Pauvre Bianchon, il ne sera jamais qu'un honnête homme !' he reveals not only his own character, but his creator's basic philosophy.

Such a taste for villains is part of the regular Romantic equipment. In Balzac this is particularly exasperating because it expresses itself in a picture of life that prides itself on truthfulness. The wicked in the real world are not more intelligent than the good—they are as a rule noticeably stupider. Most criminals are subnormal, and even the most successful business men are often comically foolish, like opera-singers, except at their own specialized job—look at Mr. Ford. I do not doubt that there are men and women who come to grief, as is the rule with so many of Balzac's characters, through their goodness, but I believe these to be very rare. On the other hand I have known several uncommonly gifted persons who have been failures for one reason only—their inability to behave with common decency. Entire self-centredness and lack of scruple may pay in Wall Street—they certainly do not pay in most departments of life. The anti-social man may indeed end as a millionaire, but he is more likely to end segregated, like a rogue elephant, or consigned in the company of other failures to the rubbish-heap of a common lodging-house. Balzac, however, was almost as consistent in rewarding wickedness as are the authors of novelettes in rewarding virtue.

Balzac's belief that most men are actuated only by low motives made him politically an absolutist ; and, though an unbeliever, a supporter of the Catholic Church. Only the fear of the jail or of the eternal flames, he thought, could preserve a society from the evil passions of the individuals of which it was composed. The

*Comédie Humaine* brims with considerations upon politics and religion as well as upon science and the arts. As often as not these are silly ; but the scope of the author's lively if superficial mind immensely reinforces the interest of his books. He is by nature, one might say by nationality, a philosopher, interested in detecting the causes of behaviour, and establishing general laws. Montaigne, Pascal, La Fontaine, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Voltaire, Chateaubriand, Stendhal—almost all the great French writers—have observed the particular in order to uncover the universal. In painting similarly the French School combines a rendering of *choses vues* with a constant concern for composition, thus accumulating the respective merits of the Dutch and the Italians. English novelists, like Dutch painters, have almost all been exclusively concerned with the particular ; and though Balzac is not a profound thinker, how alert and wide in his interests he appears when compared with our native masters ! He is a full man, hardly less interested in ideas than in passions.

It has been argued, I think by the admirable M. Faguet, that Balzac's habit of divagation impressed Flaubert like a cautionary tale, and was thus responsible for his refusal to comment openly upon what he described. In our own time we have seen brilliant essayists tempted by the popularity of the novel to express their critical opinions in the form of fiction. Many of us have therefore inclined to crack up the 'pure' novel. But after re-reading a great deal of Balzac, and of Proust, I believe the demand to be based largely on a false analogy. Not even Flaubert's novels are pure in the sense that a fugue, a triumphal arch or a painting by Braque can be pure ; and attempts at pure fiction have resulted in mere gibberish. The only valid laws in the arts, as in the sciences, are those that summarize experience. Flaubert's criticism of ideas and social behaviour may be kept rigidly implicit, but it is no less pungent than the open argumentation of Zola or Peacock. Strip Balzac's novels of his comments, and you would lose far less that is new and true than if you similarly mutilated Proust ; but you would disastrously impoverish their effect. The case I have been trying to make for Balzac (I hope without minimizing his faults) is part of a wider plea. To require every artist to be a 'pure' artist seems to me almost as futile as to require him to be a propagandist. The titans of the French Romantic Movement were all indiscreet, and given to over-emphasis—Victor Hugo, Delacroix, and Berlioz, no less noticeably than Balzac. It is the critic's business to discover and expose the merits and defects of a work ; but after this analytic process he must remember that the work itself is a synthesis, in which the defects are frequently inseparable from the merits.

## QUEEN VICTORIA

Now that the Victorian Age has become picturesque, an absurdly sentimentalised picture of the Queen herself is becoming popular. Out of the many scenes from her life dramatised by Mr. Housman, only those are acted which show her in a favourable light, while Mr. Ross Williamson's *Mr. Gladstone*, which presented a less pleasing portrait, was refused a licence by the Lord Chamberlain. The Editor of a new volume of her letters\* suggests in his Preface that Lytton Strachey inaugurated the Victorian Revival.

Up to 1921, when Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* was published, most people thought of Queen Victoria as a dull, domineering woman who had ruled a prudish and hypocritical century. . . . Lytton Strachey's conversion was the beginning of a change. He admitted that he began his book *Queen Victoria* with cynical doubts and that he ended it in a state of respect and praise.

Lytton Strachey was fascinated by the Queen's character, but that he ended his book in what Mr. Bolitho calls "a state of praise" is simply not true. He respected her directness and simplicity, he perceived the imperious vigour of her will, but above all he found her amusing, and his book is almost consistently ironical. He did indeed suggest that she mellowed in later life, but, when he wrote, only the first three volumes of her Correspondence were available. When the six later volumes appeared, he recognised that his portrait of the ageing Queen had been too indulgent. With the years she grew increasingly partisan and self-willed: Disraeli had most unscrupulously encouraged her autocratic velleities; and, moreover, her prejudices became more obnoxious, because they remained unchanged in a world that had changed and was changing with unprecedented rapidity. But if our increased knowledge of the Queen does not make her more likeable, it adds to the fascination with which we regard her formidable character. Like Dr. Johnson, she is so intensely and invariably herself, that we listen with interest to her slightest utterance. Mr. Bolitho, therefore, deserves sincere gratitude for having excavated from the Charlottenburg Archives these new letters from her so expressive and indefatigable pen. His notes are useful, but it is regrettable that he has felt obliged to make frequent omissions. Most of the letters are to Augusta of Prussia, some are to her father-in-law, Frederick William IV and her husband, William I, and a few to their son, Frederick III and his wife, the Princess

\**Further Letters of Queen Victoria*. Edited by Hector Bolitho.

Royal. They have been remarkably well translated by Mrs. Pudney and Lord Sudley, though their style is more literate than hers, and we note with a surprise amounting almost to incredulity that very few of the words are underlined.

There is one letter only that astonishes, a letter in which the Queen shows an unexpected self-knowledge and candour. She is writing from Balmoral in 1856 to Augusta to sympathise with her in her loneliness after the marriage of her daughter Wiwy.

With me the circumstances are quite different. I see the children much less, and even here, where Albert is often away all day long, I find no special pleasure or compensation in the company of the elder children. . . . Only very exceptionally do I find the rather intimate intercourse with them either agreeable or easy. You will not understand this, but it is caused by various factors. Firstly, I only feel properly *à mon aise* and quite happy when Albert is with me ; secondly, I am used to carrying on my many affairs quite alone ; and then I have grown up all alone, accustomed to the society of adult (and never with younger) people—lastly, I cannot get used to the fact that Vicky is almost grown up. To me she seems the same child, who has to be kept in order and therefore must not become too intimate.

Next take two extracts from the very touching letters written after the Prince Consort's death.

Now I feel as though I am dead ! . . . I can feel no interest or pleasure, and my one desire is that I may go to him soon, very soon ! . . . I try to comfort myself by knowing that he is always near me, although invisible, and that our future union will be even more perfect and eternal ! But my nature is too passionate, my emotions are too fervent, and I feel in sore need of someone to cling to securely, someone who would comfort and pacify me ! The longing for intercourse, the desire to see and hear him, to throw myself into his arms and find peace and security there (as was the case for twenty years), all this is too frightful and galls me day and night.

Every evening comes the terrible return home, which is so agonising to me ! The house is empty, quiet, desolate ! Where is he ? I still listen in the hope that he may yet come in, his door may open and his angelic form will and must return, as so often before, from his shooting. I could go mad from the desire and longing !

The extraordinary heat of the Queen's passion for her husband is perfectly balanced by the extraordinary coldness of her feelings for her children. It is fascinating to see that the great Matriarch was by nature so much of a lover, so little of a mother ; and we understand why her eldest son, when a man of over fifty, was seen pale with terror before entering her presence. The perpetual

gush of self-pity, the delight in the trappings of woe, the enjoyment of pulling a long face for its own sake—all of them disquieting features of her correspondence—are seen more clearly than ever to be the pathological, though pathetic, refuge of an uncommonly passionate woman, whose emotions had somehow to be indulged. In these letters we get, of course, “the dear remains” and even “the dear coffin,” as well as “dear Lord Beaconsfield.” There is also a letter (incomplete) about John Brown’s death.

I feel terribly depressed, and get more so instead of less, for I miss my faithful, kind friend and constant companion more and more at every turn, especially just now, when I so greatly need his care and strong arm. I enclose a photograph of him, but will send more later, as I think you would like to have them as reminders of so many happy hours spent together. . . . I am sending the photograph unframed, as it is easier to pack. Perhaps you will have it framed and put up where you can sometimes look at it.

There is not anything unusual, still less anything absurd, about an elderly lady’s devotion to an old servant, but was there not an excess of self-centredness in supposing that the Empress Augusta would be likely to want in her apartments a framed photograph of the venerable gillie?

The political letters are less interesting. Already in 1852 she has no hesitation in confiding to the King of Prussia her low opinion of her Ministers :

Your Majesty will have wept bitter tears with the rest of Europe on hearing of Lord Palmerston’s retirement from my Cabinet ! I pray that the public here will understand that England’s rational policy was not correctly expressed in his interpretation of it !

(Does not “the public *here*” mean “the public in Germany” ?) And in 1884 she writes to the Crown Prince : “In spite of all my efforts I cannot prevent my Government from committing the grossest acts of folly.” There are two letters to Augusta about visits from Napoleon III and his Empress : the enthusiasm, intended to give little pleasure in Prussia, with which the Queen writes is tempered in one sentence only, about the Empress : “Until the last day she never came down to breakfast !”

The letters in this volume include attempts by the Queen to preserve peace both in Europe and in the Prussian Royal Family. I think that their high interest has been made clear by the above extracts, to which I will add one more. This letter to Augusta is written from Osborne in 1868 :

Mr. Disraeli has achieved his present high position entirely by his ability, his *wonderful, happy disposition* and the astounding way



in which he carried through the Reform Bill, and I have nothing but praise for him.

The italics are the Queen's.

Another book that throws new light on Queen Victoria is a life of the Lord Clarendon who was Foreign Secretary in the Liberal administration of the Fifties and Sixties.\* Here are three striking extracts from Lady Clarendon's diary : in 1862, a few weeks after the Prince Consort's death, she writes :

Lord Palmerston thinks that any Government will have trouble from her adherence to Prince Albert's opinions, of which she will constitute herself the sole judge . . . the serious misfortune Lord Palmerston sees looking ahead is her unconquerable aversion to the Prince of Wales. He said to the Queen all he ventured to do on the subject, which was not much and without the least effect. He said that with Clarendon's tact he might have a better chance, and he urged him to try.

So try he did.

Clarendon found this situation much worse than he expected. It was, he said, a positive monomania with her. She got quite excited while speaking of him, and said that it quite irritated her to see him in the room. I believe the poor boy knows of his mother's dislike of him, but seems to have the good taste not to speak of it.

Clarendon saw her again eighteen months later, when the Tory Opposition was harrying the Whig Government :

When she and Clarendon talked about the possible change of Ministry . . . she said that she felt *that* would be what she could not stand, that she would throw everything up, that she knew she would go mad, that three times at Balmoral she had thought she was going mad, and that all that a change of Ministry would entail upon her now would be more than her reason could stand ; that if they wished to kill her—and most *thankful* to them she would be for that result—they would drive on a change of Government—but that it would kill her, and that through *madness*. She wished the Opposition to know this. Lord Derby she thought she could depend upon, but she knew the Prince's opinion of Disraeli. She wished Clarendon to let them know what the result to her would be of a change of Government now. . . . Whilst talking of the state of her mind her eye and manner became excited, and Clarendon could see that any encouragement would put her into a highly nervous state. She tapped her forehead with her hand and said “My reason, my reason.”

This is highly important, because references to the Queen's fear of madness (and her blackmailing use of it) have hitherto, I think, been suppressed. The memory of her grandfather's

\* *A Vanished Victorian*. The Life of George Villiers, 4th Earl of Clarendon, 1800-70. By his grandson, George Villiers.

insanity no doubt increased the alarm of the overburdened woman whose violence of feeling we have already seen exemplified in her German letters. This unhappy fear explains what hitherto has been an enigma—the contrast between her habitual shrewdness and her occasional obstinacy in a foolish course. Her refusal to appear in public, no less than her loathing for her son, was a sign of mental instability.

## GIDE

GIDE has never been a popular writer. Unlike Barrès and Wells, he has been the voice of no faith to which groups could rally. Yet his influence on individuals not only in France but in Germany, the smaller countries and both the Americas, has been incalculable. In England he is still a neglected author. A few of his books have been admirably translated by Dorothy Bussy, and he has made his mark upon a few writers now in their forties—Aldous Huxley, for instance, who has, however, been more ready to learn from him than to praise him. I count my first happening, during the last war, upon *Les Nourritures Terrestres* as a crucial experience : it is discreditable that so potent a book has not yet been published in England ; and, ever since, I have read and re-read Gide with continuous interest. He seems to me the most distinguished writer alive. His genius is nourished by a fervour alike of the brain and of the senses : a scientifically trained intellect serves his devotion to truth, while an elastic, pellucid and melodious style reflects every tremor of his sensibility. He is a poet, a humourist and a logician. But he has always refused to be rhetorical or explicit, requiring the reader to meet him at least half way. He belongs, in fact, to the clan not of Voltaire or Victor Hugo, but of Racine and Stendhal. He does not want his tower to be of ivory, he tells us—rather is it of glass, a vulnerable observatory. Outside of it, he adds, he is worth nothing ; but there have been bold sorties. In *Corydon* he tried to popularise his opinion that homosexuality was not necessarily either unnatural or antisocial ; then he became a Communist, proclaimed his faith : went to Russia, and proclaimed his dis-

illusionment. (This was the more courageous, because his Communism had brought him for the first time a wide public.) It was not Communism but the Soviet Government in which he had lost his faith. In any case the effect of these excursions has been to antagonise in turn almost every province of opinion. How indeed could a man make himself more generally disliked than by believing in the Gospels, disbelieving in private property, and practising pederasty?

But if it is impossible to agree with Gide, his writings exercise a constant and extraordinary charm upon our intelligence. He has now published the *Journal* that he has kept for fifty years. It contains over a half a million words, and is of unique interest, for no other writer of Gide's importance—unless Edmond de Goncourt is to be so considered—has confided to us any comparable document. It contains many enlightening, often malicious, details about a variety of personages, Mallarmé, Degas, Claudel, Valéry, Jammes, Charles-Louis Philippe, Roger Martin du Gard, Schlumberger, Copeau, Blum; and a wealth of comment upon literature and music. (He is a pianist who could have been a virtuoso.) But the most fascinating subject he treats is Gide. The self-portrait he paints is in many ways unprepossessing, for if he is often unkind about his friends, he does not spare himself. Moreover, he takes to his journal chiefly when depressed—and in gloom one inevitably resorts to inelegant self-pity and self-justification. It is curious to find him complaining about the failure of his books (in 1922, when he already enjoyed a European reputation); and it is ironical that fourteen years later he is groaning over their success; "Ah! l'heureux temps où je n'étais pas écouté! Et que l'on parle bien, tant qu'on parle dans le désert!" The diary of the last few years becomes less interesting, his decision to publish it in his lifetime making him, unintentionally, more discreet.

Gide has always been enigmatic, his enemies would say tortuous. He seems to find no difficulty in reconciling contrary emotions. With equal ardour he preaches the spirit and the senses, abnegation and incontinence: he pores over the logia of Christ, to whom his devotion is profound, and he finds in debauchery not merely pleasure but deep, untroubled happiness. The *Journal* illuminates, far better than any critic could, this double thread. "Je ne suis qu'un petit garçon qui s'amuse—doublé d'un pasteur protestant qui l'ennuie." (Note that the pastor is not bored but boring—I first read the word, most misleadingly, as "s'ennuie".) The cause he discovers in his heredity,

which crosses in him two very different systems of life. In consequence :

Rien ne se tient, rien n'est constant ni sûr, dans ma vie. Tour à tour je ressemble et diffère ; il n'y a pas de créature si étrangère que je ne puisse jurer d'approcher. Je ne sais encore, à 36 ans, si je suis avare ou prodigue, sobre ou glouton . . . ou plutôt, me sentant porté soudain de l'un à l'autre extrême, dans ce balancement même je sens que ma fatalité s'accomplit. Pourquoi formerais-je, en m'imitant facticement moi-même, la factice unité de ma vie ? C'est dans le mouvement que je peux trouver équilibre.

A passage written twenty years later continues the explanation—it is attributed to "T," but we cannot doubt that Gide is speaking of himself :

Je n'ai jamais rien su renoncer ; et protégeant en moi à la fois le meilleur et le pire, c'est en écartelé que j'ai vécu. Mais comment expliquer que cette cohabitation en moi des extrêmes n'amenât point tant d'inquiétude et de souffrance, qu'une intensification pathétique du sentiment de l'existence de la vie ? Les tendances les plus opposées n'ont jamais réussi à faire de moi un être tourmenté ; mais perplexe—car le tourment accompagne un état dont on souhaite de sortir, et je ne souhaitais point d'échapper à ce qui mettait en vigueur toutes les virtualités de mon être ; cet *état de dialogue* qui, pour tant d'autres, est à peu près intolérable, devenait pour moi nécessaire.

To suppress the dialogue within oneself, he writes again, is to arrest the development of life ; "Je ne sais plus bien qui je suis ; ou, si l'on préfère : je ne suis jamais ; je deviens."

The explanation of this duality, one may suggest, is more likely to be found in Gide's childhood than in his heredity. A more obvious instance of the Oedipus situation could hardly be found. Unfortunately, he has excised from his Journal almost all the references to his wife—which, he admits, results in his self-portrait being mutilated and incomprehensible. One can only guess at the influence upon his life of this saintly Protestant lady. We see that he loved her deeply, and while hating and fearing to wound her, forced himself continually to do so. One can further deduce that in her he rediscovered his mother. (Like Alissa in *La Porte Etroite* she was a cousin, older than himself ; and Alissa—Gide emphasises the fact—resembled Jérôme's mother.) Upon this hypothesis we understand why for Gide love and desire have, as he tells us, always been separated. And this dichotomy in turn seems the source of the perpetual dialogue within him. On the one hand, in his country house in Normandy, the enveloping gentleness of domesticity, days at the writing table, evenings of reading aloud in the lamplight, unruffled nights.

On the other hand, travel, unfamiliar places, the desert and the waterfront, new faces, young bodies, the intoxication of the chase. For him both types of experience are fruitful, and the fact that the two cannot be enjoyed simultaneously does not diminish the validity of either. It is not to Gide but to his critics that this alternation is disquieting. The trouble is that he sometimes persuades himself that the Gospels authorise his libertinage; the boy amusing himself borrows the voice of the Protestant pastor.

As a novelist Gide (like Mauriac) benefits vastly from feeling the violent fascination of both the spirit and the senses. And his refusal to opt (as Mauriac does) for one party to this contest is a further aesthetic advantage. He defines his ideal of the novel as "a crossroads—a meeting-place of problems." Personally I prefer *L'Immoraliste* and *Les Caves du Vatican* to *La Porte Etroite*, in which the exquisiteness of the writing cannot conceal a certain *niaiserie*, a flavour at once sweet and insipid, like that of sago; even in *Les Faux Monnayeurs* Edouard seems to me a touch too high-minded. The little boy may be bored by the pastor, but he keeps looking for his approval. Few writers have been so persistently autobiographical as Gide: moreover his work not only reflects but modifies him. He tells us

que le livre, sitôt conçu, dispose de moi tout entier, et que, pour lui, tout en moi, jusqu'au plus profond de moi s'instrumente. Je n'ai plus d'autre personnalité que celle qui convient à cette œuvre—objective? subjective? Ces mots perdent ici tout leur sens; car s'il m'arrive de peindre d'après moi (et parfois il me paraît qu'il ne se peut d'autre exacte peinture), c'est que d'abord j'ai commencé par devenir celui-là même que je voulais peindre.

I do not know what other novelist has made this admission, or should one say this boast? In Gide's case one feels it to be particularly true. He has been not only Ménalque, Michel, the Prodigal Son, Lafcadio and Edouard, but Marcelline, Alissa, the pastor in *La Symphonie Pastorale*, and Robert. Perhaps indeed it is the novelist's vocation that has obliged him to cultivate that duplicity (in no pejorative sense) which has baffled many of his readers. With a more integrated personality, the novelist would have been less richly equipped. "Chacun de mes livres a été jusqu'à présent" (he notes in 1932) "la mise en valeur d'une incertitude"; and if his inventive powers are declining, it is because his perplexities decrease. These remarks can be commended to critics of the novel. There are others beside Gide, whose art may

be the fruit and the reward of an unintegrated personality—Henry James, I suggest, and Proust, and even Tolstoy.

The most constant emotion in Gide—the thread that joins the Christian and the pagan—is his hatred of conventions, of comfort, of worldly bonds. “M’a toujours tourmenté le souci du moindre bagage,” and his love of denudation extends to style: “Je souhaite une éloquence cachée.” The result has sometimes been a certain colourlessness.

Moins peintre que musicien, il est certain que c’est le mouvement, de préférence à la couleur, que je souhaitais à ma phrase. Je voulais qu’elle suivît fidèlement les palpitations de mon cœur.

Gide commenced author among the Symbolists, and for a long while he allowed himself a preciosity, conspicuous in the syntax and placing of the words. In the *Journal* he quotes twice a phrase that lingers in his memory from an early poem of which he has no copy; “Froide à mes mains mais pour elles tiède, je sens, ah ! dans cette eau brunie, ces vivantes racines heureuses.” Affected, deliciously musical, accurate, this line reveals in Gide the scientist as well as the poet—the imagination of a Barrès would never have considered what was the temperature natural to a water-plant ! Gide has been indefatigable in his pursuit of truth, and so exacting in regard to his own sincerity that his candour has been called narcissism and exhibitionism. He refused in 1931 to write about the heroic anti-fascist de Bosis, despite his admiration, because he himself lacked faith in liberty : approving, as he then did, of the absence of liberty in Russia, he would not condemn a similar absence in Italy, different as he considered the purposes of the two states to be. And he makes his own the words of a Jansenist, words that every intellectual should have by heart : “Whatever your station or country,” (I translate as best I can) “you should believe only what is true, and what you would be disposed to believe if you were of another country, another station, another religion.” Indeed the human quality dearest to Gide is disinterestedness, and his judgment on characters, whether in life or in his novels, depends upon the extent to which this quality obtains in them. This is the explanation of the famous *acte gratuit*, which has been so much misinterpreted, in *Les Caves du Vatican*—the murder of a stranger in a train. The act is unmotivated—or, it would be more accurate to say, it can be of no practical advantage to the murderer. It gives him however a sense of power like that enjoyed by a creative artist. Gide wished, he explains, to show that disinterestedness is not necessarily charitable ; and, I think it fair to add, so

fascinated is he by the beauty of disinterestedness, that he admires it even in the form of a crime.

Though Gide has many feelings in common with Blake (whose *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* he has translated), he remains incorrigibly an intellectual. His reserve, his dislike of the explicit, his obliqueness often remind me of Mr. E. M. Forster, though Gide is more adventurous and incomparably more lyrical. But imagine what the interest would be of a diary kept by Mr. Forster throughout his life, and you have a notion of the enjoyment to be derived from the Gide Journal. It is, I suppose, unreasonable to expect a publisher to give us an English translation of so vast a performance. But it seems to me not only the most illuminating of Gide's works, but one of the salient books of our time.

## MACAULAY

INACCURATE and prejudiced, flamboyant and complacently Philistine, the writings of Lord Macaulay have fallen from an almost unsurpassed popularity into comparative neglect. Even the two Masters of Arts who have compiled a book of selections from his works are in their introduction more deprecatory than enthusiastic.\* As an historian, they say, he is not to be ranked with Carlyle; as a stylist, he is not to be compared with Pater. To the literal truth of this statement I would willingly subscribe. Macaulay's style is not comparable to Pater's—it is generically different. His rank as an historian is not the same as Carlyle's—it is enormously higher. For whatever the graces of a history may be, its first function is to set out the facts. And even those who find Carlyle graceful must admit that if you want some particular fact about Frederick the Great, the last place to find it is in the eight volumes of Carlyle's History. The venom with which succeeding historians have treated Macaulay is easily comprehensible. He committed the sin that to professional men is most unforgivable: he opened the arcana to the general public. His avowed object was "to supersede the last fashionable novel

\**Selections from Macaulay.* Edited by E. V. Downs, M.A., and G. L. Davies, M.A.

on the tables of young ladies." In this object he succeeded. And the professional historians have made his reputation pay for his success.

The supreme quality of Macaulay is that he is one of the most readable of all authors. Life is long and Art is short. That is to say, the satisfactory books of the world are still rather few in comparison to the 350,000 hours of leisure which the life of even a hard-working person may easily contain. Of Macaulay's works what reviewers so continually and so falsely say about new novels is true : that once opened they are difficult to lay down. Not only is the writing invariably vivid, but each sentence and each paragraph invites you to read its successor. Macaulay scores with the certainty of a champion pigeon-shooter. "Every subject," he says somewhere, "has striking and interesting sides to it if people could only find it out." There were interesting sides that Macaulay never discovered, but the side he did discover was never dull. His narrative carries us along beside the shores of the past at speeds always appropriate to the spectacle afforded. In his *History* he wrote no faster than Time itself : the events of fifteen years took him fifteen years to record. The compositor told him that there was only one sentence he did not understand at the first reading, and the reader may add that there is not one sentence which he did not enjoy.

Macaulay's style is based upon Gibbon, Johnson, and the Latins. When he was taken to Strawberry Hill at the age of four, Lady Waldegrave inquired after his toothache. "Thank you, Madam," the child replied, "the agony is abated." The pomposity of his language about most trivial matters is often comic, but like the mannerisms of other great writers, it is also endearing. Often he labours some obvious point with an unnecessary wealth of argument and analogy. As Leslie Stephen said, "nobody can hit a haystack with a surer aim"—but who complains in face of a torrent that it would reach the sea as surely with a slighter display of energy? In his *Lays* he uses romantic metres, but the structure remains Augustan : while the form is Scott's, the similes are derived from Homer, and the neatness from Pope. Born in 1800, and fixed in his tastes and opinions before he left Cambridge, he remained as unaffected by Romanticism as by Radicalism. His verse, unlike Scott's, is still readable. It has the same qualities as his prose. But even at its best, as in the epitaph on the Exiled Jacobite, who

Heard on Lavernia Scargill's whispering trees  
And pined by Arno for *his* lovelier Tees,



it never rises beyond an eighteenth-century sensibility. His prose is always in the Grand Manner. Sentence is piled upon sentence according to the rules of rhetoric, and after a rain of short sentences, the paragraph is driven home with a final bang: "The most impudent of all lies was a fit companion for the foulest of all murders." He is a master of invective, but his words never suggest more than they state, and the rapid reader misses nothing. Macaulay's style has the beauty only of perfect adaptation to its purpose. He can match a pageant with sumptuous words, he can paint the more apparent beauties of nature—as in this description of Ireland:

The turf is of livelier hue than elsewhere: the hills glow with a richer purple: the varnish of the holly and the ivy is more glossy: and berries of a brighter red peep through foliage of a brighter green.

But of "something far more deeply interfused," there is never a glimpse. For all his admiration of Shelley and Coleridge, he entirely lacked the sense of mystery and inexorable fate.

This limitation is his great weakness. His superlatives and exaggerations, his passion for making white whiter and black blacker, his love of unresolved discords in character—look at his Boswell and his Marlborough—seem attempts to use the picturesque to compensate for the absence of the poetic. He was born a solid Philistine, and nothing occurred to unbalance him. A financial misfortune only gave him a chance to play the pious son and virtuous apprentice; and the experience that caused him most distress appears to have been the loss of an election. A good and kind man, he was never, that I can discover, in the least in love, and his one love poem is comically ungallant, with its dismissal of the lady ("O fly, Madonna, fly") at the crack of dawn. One doubts if he knew even the agitation of a vulgar sexual adventure. He found *Moll Flanders* "utterly wretched and nauseous"; he dismissed the Restoration dramatists as merely disgusting; and even Queen Mary's taste for Chinese porcelain excited his moral disapprobation. The historian as well as the critic was damaged by the narrowness of his experience. Of Frederick the Great he says that "he was accused of vices from which History averts her eyes, and which even Satire blushes to name." Unluckily, he chose as hero for his masterpiece a neurotic whom he could not possibly understand; and from William's temperament the historian averted his eyes with only too great success.

Macaulay's puritanism was, however, less harmful than the complacency produced by so undisquieted a life in so progressive and hopeful a period. A loyal son of Cambridge, he had little

sympathy for lost causes and impossible loyalties. And he saw history, not as the tragedy of the human race, but as a moral tale ending in the Victorians living happily ever afterwards. This led him to what he himself stigmatises as "the error of judging the past by the present." In the chapter "On the State of England in 1685" he never tires of emphasising the superiority of the England of Queen Victoria to the England of Newton, Dryden and Wren. He might, indeed, have anticipated Taine by calling his History "The Origins of Contemporary England," and there are times when his chief object in describing the past, one would say, is to contrast it with the excellence of the present. He cannot paint William's landing at Tor Bay without congratulating himself upon the villas which have since embellished the scene; and when his subject takes him to Cork, he deploras the fact that the city did not in the seventeenth century contain a town hall in the style of Sir Gilbert Scott. At the same time, he was the first historian, I think, to perceive that the social life of the common people was at least as important a part of history as dynastic wars and the making of constitutions.

His Whig bias is an impropriety far less momentous than his complacent belief in the absolute rightness of Victorian standards. Similarly his factual errors are less important than the limitations of his sensibility. John Paget exposed the untrustworthiness of his accounts of Penn, Marlborough and Glencoe, while Spedding, protesting too much, assaulted his essay on Bacon with two volumes of elaborate erudition. The real scandal of that essay is not an occasional inaccuracy, still less the quite defensible estimate of Bacon's character, but the vulgar contempt that Macaulay displays for all disinterested speculation. His capacity was indeed no greater for profound thought than for profound feeling. But it is neither as a philosopher nor as a poet that Macaulay presents himself to posterity. It is as an historian with the most magnificent powers of narration.

The great Victorians were extraordinary unlike the Victorian type evolved by the imagination of the moderns. Darwin was no more a prig than Swinburne was a puritan: no one could wish for artists to be more neurotic than Tennyson, Ruskin, and Carlyle. But Macaulay, the greater part of whose life was over before the death of William IV, was entirely immune from the "strange disease of modern life" which afflicted these writers. He was Victorian as the Queen and her less distinguished subjects were Victorian. And it is this more than the hostility of later historians which has wrecked his popularity. He remains a magnificent artist, but he requires to be read in bulk. He was

averse himself from the re-publication of his Essays ; he expressed a regret which one cannot share that he had ever written on purely literary subjects ; and it is on the History that he wished and deserves to be judged.

I will end with two quotations, one about dogs from his Correspondence, and the other from a magazine article :

How odd that people of sense should find any pleasure in being accompanied by a beast which is always spoiling conversation !

Truth is the object even of those works which are peculiarly called works of fiction, but which, in fact, bear the same relation to history which algebra bears to arithmetic.

Perhaps there are others beside myself to whom Macaulay may endear himself by these casual comments.

## GENERAL BOOTH

IN his preface to *God's Soldier* Mr. St. John Ervine at once wins the reader's sympathy by explaining that the success of his play *The First Mrs. Fraser* enabled him to devote six years to writing a Life of General Booth, in whom he is interested as one of "those who having no social influence, rebel against authority, defeat authority, and create authority." His book is a most careful work, and unless important new material is produced, will remain the chief authority upon Booth. Unluckily Mr. Ervine has been so fascinated by his subject that his power of selection has been dulled ; much of the material included is uninteresting, and the book does not seem well suited to the general reader. An abbreviated version would be welcome, in which Mr. Ervine could show the incisiveness that distinguishes his journalistic work.

This book destroys the legend, fostered by the General in his old age, that he was the child of middle-class people who had come down in the world. Actually he was brought up in extreme poverty, his father could not even sign his name, and he himself remained a highly uneducated man. (Mr. Ervine is quick with the obvious reminder that Christ was the son of a carpenter's wife, but the analogy is false, for He continued to be as poor as

He was unworldly, and vulgarity is the last charge that could be brought against the Gospels.) At the age of thirteen the young Booth was apprenticed to a pawnbroker, and the daily traffic with misery no doubt impressed his imagination. His mother was religious, and possibly of Jewish extraction, but the book throws little light on the causes of his vocation. Mr. Ervine aims a few jeers at modern psychology, and there the matter rests ; but it is recorded that both the General and his wife suffered from chronic dyspepsia. (One notices, incidentally, that an extraordinarily high proportion of Salvation Army officers wear spectacles. Is there a causal connection between faulty eyesight and religious fervour ? Or are the spectacles merely a symbol of gentility ?). William Booth possessed enormous energy, and it is no reflection upon his sincerity to add that he also had remarkable dramatic powers and great ambition. The most necessary and the most difficult virtue for a saint, humility, he never attained. He knew what he wanted ; and he believed that what he wanted, God wanted. Mr. Ervine frequently compares him to St. Francis of Assisi : in many ways he seems to me more like Napoleon—an autocrat, weakened by the wish to place members of his family in places of importance, and to found a dynasty. (Three of his children revolted from his rule.) For years he and his followers were persecuted by magistrates as well as by mobs, but he lived to be one of the great popular figures of the country, and there is pathos and irony in the pleasure this stern puritan derived from his interview with Edward VII. He had no interests outside the Army and his family : he was a God-intoxicated man, or rather God-infested, as Mr. Ervine likes to say—presumably because the General, though a cleanly man, would have preferred a metaphor derived from fleas to one derived from alcohol. He was a missionary of genius, but he was not a mystic ; and ultimately it is only his success, I think, which makes him interesting.

It would be unwise to belittle the practical achievements of the Salvation Army. It brought religion out of the stuffy respectable little chapels into the streets ; and it has been more Christ-like than any other sect in its devotion to outcasts : prostitutes, jail-birds, riff-raff whom no one else would help, have been its especial care ; and in India, South Africa, and the United States it has refused to recognise race-distinctions. Those who receive its benefits are apt to complain of the intensive religiosity to which they are subjected, but half a loaf and a dozen hymns are better than no bread. The founder, his wife, his son the second General, and the rank and file have shown a devotion that has been

entire and marvellous. But if one believes that the doctrine which has produced these results is a false doctrine, the question imposes itself whether the tangible good results are not outweighed by the intangible bad ones, and this is a question which Mr. Ervine in over 1,100 pages hardly touches upon. In a world that needs clear thinking as sorely as it needs good will, Salvationism is an insistent denial of the intellect.

The Salvation Army is fundamentalist, and all fundamentalists seem to assume that the Authorised Version suddenly appeared complete, ready printed, paragraphed, and bound. In fact, it is a selection of writings slowly made by Catholic authorities, finally settled as a canon in the fifteenth century, and then deprived by the Anglican Reformers of the books known as the Apocrypha. The authority of the Bible, that is to say, rests only upon an authority that is denied by its fundamentalist worshippers. Moreover, when it suited the Booths to go against the Scriptures, they did not hesitate to do so. Not only did they reject Baptism and Communion, but they employed women preachers, and Mrs. Booth particularly "abominated" such teetotallers as followed St. Paul's advice by taking a little wine for their stomach's sake. The visible ravages of alcohol in Victorian England no doubt could explain the Booths' violence about drink—Mrs. Booth's own father was a drunkard—but their fanatical hatred of tobacco is more difficult to account for; and the Salvationist insistence upon the sinfulness of smoking shows a dangerously unbalanced scale of moral values. Mr. Ervine, while condemning the puritan attitude to the arts of fiction and drama which he himself practises, speaks with sympathy of puritan homes. He omits to mention that General Booth's son used to be "whipped severely" at the age of two: "It has done him good," Mrs. Booth wrote with insufferable complacency, "and I am reaping the reward already of my self-sacrifice." Salvationists condemn many innocent pleasures on the ground that Christ (in their opinion) would not have indulged in them. But there is no amusement, however frivolous, that seems to me so incongruous with the character of the Christ of the Gospels as this solemn beating of a little child. Mr. Ervine, an Ulster bee buzzing in his bonnet, tries to show that Catholics can be as puritanical as Protestants: a good case can be made for this, but not by referring, as Mr. Ervine frequently does, to the Jansenists, ignoring the fact that these were condemned as heretical. Moreover, Catholics have always held that beauty could, indeed should, be used for the glorification of God, but the Salvationists hate or at the least ignore it. Hell fire and cleansing by blood are

the pivots of their doctrine. These are beliefs which the traditionalist Churches have refined and attenuated with the growth of civilisation, but they appeal to the savage; and it is to the savages who survive in civilised countries to the disgrace of the social system, that the Salvation Army makes its appeal. Prostitutes and drunkards are usually either neurotic or subnormal in intelligence, and their emotional instability makes them quick to respond to these primaeval notions. It may be argued that any belief which can reform such outcasts is justified by its results, that Christianity was originally a slave-religion, and that the Salvationists have restored it to its original state. But the Christian will answer that the appeal of his faith is to all classes, to the learned as well as to the ignorant; and the rationalist will argue that a religion based upon fables and working through emotional excitement must be eventually degrading. As Huxley wrote in his attack on General Booth:

Few social evils are of greater magnitude than uninstructed and unchastened religious fanaticism; no personal habit more surely degrades the conscience and the intellect than blind and unhesitating obedience to unlimited authority.

In fact, a tyranny imposing itself by emotionalism is evil, whether it is in the hands of a Booth or a Hitler. To these arguments the devotion of Salvationists is no response: there is no belief too foolish or too debased to excite enthusiasm and self-sacrifice. And in any case the bigot must be presumed to derive more pleasure from denouncing sins than he would from practising them.

Huxley, in his attack on the Salvation Army, cited the Franciscans as an example of the deterioration liable to come over an institution after the founder's death. And in the *épilogue* to his book, Mr. Ervine describes the squabbles which after General Booth's death ended in the deposition of his son and successor, Bramwell Booth. The conduct of the protagonists was not merely unchristian but disgustingly squalid, and two of those who appear most disadvantageously in Mr. Ervine's account are General Higgins, who replaced Bramwell Booth, and Eveline, or, as she prefers to call herself, Evangeline Booth, the present General. As a rich institution run by a bureaucracy under an autocrat, the Salvation Army will no doubt continue, but its future does not seem bright. It has always lacked the intellectual basis and the poetry that differentiate Christianity from savage religions, and it now appears to lack the daemonic leadership that created it and imposed it upon a hostile world. Moreover, every improvement in education and in the standard of living

diminishes the number of the savages among us to whom the Salvationists—it is at once their strength and their weakness—can effectively appeal.

## GEORGE HERBERT

THE unceasing tides of taste have, during the last twenty-five years, made the Metaphysical School of poetry most fashionable among the younger generation of poets and critics. Contemporary verse-writers look to Donne for an example, and justly claim that their obscurity is hardly greater than his. It is evidently to the good that we should be persuaded to make the effort needed for the enjoyment of Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw; but there is a noticeable vogue for denigrating other orders of poetic beauty. The main current of English verse, I suggest, runs through Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Gray, Wordsworth and Tennyson—it is a European current that has its sources in Greece and Rome, and that can profitably be compared with similar streams in Italy and France, from which, indeed, frequent channels have brought to it further width and depth. The poetry of the Metaphysicals is remarkable and rich, a backwater exuberant with rare flowers, and not unconnected with certain little-visited Continental creeks named Gongora and Marini. But to denigrate Milton or Keats for the greater glory of the Metaphysicals seems to me as unnecessary as it is provincial. Metaphysical poetry was, in no pejorative sense, grotesque. Johnson defined its practice “as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, a discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike.” In modern terms one would say that it aimed at the exploitation of incongruities. Much less visual than the main stream, it illustrated by concepts rather than by objects; or else employed objects in such a context that they cannot be visualised by the imagination. (Browning, Hopkins, and Meredith in their individual ways can be considered to resume the Metaphysicals’ exploration of the grotesque, but their poetry is conspicuously more visual.) Donne, the founder of the School, invented a technique that in

the hands of men lacking his stupendous force of intellectual imagination—a Cleveland, for instance, or a Benlowes—could produce at best engaging whimsicalities. (And both these poets do in fact afford pleasure and entertainment.) The best of Donne's influence can be studied in Marvell, and even more conspicuously in George Herbert. And here is a new, most scholarly, and indeed definitive, edition of Herbert, the publication of which at the present time, and in such admirable printing, does much credit to its publishers.\*

Rightly exalted as one of the major glories of Anglicanism, the "mild" Herbert is often thought to personify the distinguishing qualities of the Established Church—its sobriety, its amiability, the fastidiousness that one recognises in its swept and ungarnished cathedrals, resonant with the silvery intoning of Minor Canons and the soaring bird-notes of apple-cheeked choristers, so incomparably more tasteful (and less potent) than the quick mutterings and nasal yells that you hear among the dim, tawdry altars and undusted confessionals of the cathedrals in Italy and Spain. The poems by which Herbert is usually represented in anthologies confirm this impression, "Love bade me welcome," "When God at first made man," and "I got me flowers to straw thy way." But a complete reading of Herbert's poetry makes a richer, more tenebrous effect. His mysticism, it is true, usually avoids the erotic language that springs naturally to the lips of most Catholic poets. He treats God as a father, an uncle, or a friend, rather than as a lover. But the intensity of his emotion is none the less violent for not being luscious. The black night of the soul, through which mystics must pass, descended upon him not once but again and again, so that he was always suffering new agonies from what might be called the Divine capriciousness. For a moment, as in *The Collar* (to my sense almost his finest poem), he would rebel. Usually he bowed his head.

To have my aim, and yet to be  
Further from it then when I bent my bow;  
To make my hopes my torture, and the fee  
Of all my woes another wo,  
Is in the midst of delicates to need,  
And ev'n in Paradise to be a weed.

\* \* \*

Profaneness in my head,  
Defects and darknesse in my breast,  
A noise of passions ringing me for dead

\* *The Works of George Herbert*. Edited by F. E. Hutchinson.



Unto a place where is no rest :  
 Poor priest thus am I drest.  
                   \*                  \*                  \*

O do not blinde me !  
 I have deserv'd that an Egyptian night  
 Should thicken all my powers ; because my lust  
 Hath still sow'd fig-leaves to exclude thy light :  
 But I am frailtie, and already dust ;  
 O do not grinde me !

He is seized by the mystic's perception that Christ suffers within  
 all men, including himself :

Thy life on earth was grief, and thou art still  
 Constant unto it, making it to be  
 A point of honour, now to grieve in me,  
 And in thy members suffer ill.  
                   \*                  \*                  \*

My friend may spit upon my curious floore :  
 Would he have gold ? I lend it instantly ;  
 But let the poore,  
 And thou within them, starve at doore.  
 I cannot use a friend as I use Thee.

I suspect the reference to spitting reflects an actual incident :  
 Herbert was an invalidish aristocrat, and the poems, no less than  
*A Priest to the Temple*, suggest an almost morbid concern for  
 cleanliness. He is obsessed, like Donne and nearly all convinced  
 Christians, with the grave. Usually he thinks of death in terms  
 of dust rather than of corruption and the worm ; but I fancy  
 he found even dust disgusting :

                  . . . till death blow  
 The dust into our eyes :  
 For by that powder thou wilt make me see.  
                   \*                  \*                  \*

When th'hair is sweet through pride and lust  
 The powder doth forget the dust.

Or examine this Shakespearean image :

And wanton in thy cravings, thou mayst know,  
 That flesh is but the glasse, which holds the dust  
 That measures all our time.

Sometimes, however, he turns a horrified eye to uglier intimations  
 of mortality :

The brags of life are but a nine dayes wonder ;  
 And after death the fumes that spring  
 From private bodies make as big a thunder,  
 As those which rise from a huge King.

His most beautiful poem about death is *Mortification* :

When boyes go first to bed,  
They step into their voluntarie graves,  
Sleep bindes them fast : onely their breath  
Makes them not dead ;  
Successive nights, like rolling waves,  
Convey them quickly, who are bound for death.

Herbert talks of having known the ways of pleasure, "The proposition of hot blood and brains ; What mirth and musick mean"—"My stuffe is fleshe, not brasse ; my senses live, And grumble oft." Yet one feels that ambition and social pride, rather than the grosser appetities, were his besetting temptations or afflictions :

We are the earth ; and they  
Like moles within us, heave, and cast about ;  
And till they foot and clutch their prey,  
They never cool. . . .

In his worldly days, as Public Orator of Cambridge, he had been a friend of Bacon and a successful flatterer of James I—two uncommonly nasty fellows. It is not surprising, therefore, that his memories plunge him in misanthropic moods :

Surely if each one saw another's heart,  
There would be no commerce,  
No sale or bargain passe : all would disperse  
And live apart.

But a worldly good sense sometimes provides the Christian with an argument, as in these verses against unavailing anxiety :

God chains the dog till night ; wilt loose the chain,  
And wake thy sorrow ?  
Wilt thou forestall it, and now grieve to-morrow,  
And then again  
Grieve over freshly all thy pain ?

Either grief will not come : or if it must  
Do not forecast.  
And while it cometh, it is almost past.  
Away distrust :  
My God hath promis'd ; he is just.

Herbert had much pleasure from his ears : consider this address to Church Music :

Now I in you without a bodie move,  
Rising and falling with your wings :  
We both together sweetly live and love,  
Yet say sometimes, *God help poore Kings.*

And whereas Donne was the first English writer to divorce lyric poetry from "words for music"—an innovation obviously of supreme importance—Herbert's poems would almost all admit of being sung. His particular distinction is the patience with which he planned and built each of his poems as an entity. If in short quotations he seems to be less dazzling and piercing than Vaughan (who borrowed from him indefatigably), his poems as wholes are much superior. He subdues his fancy to his general design, but not from any shortage of wit.

The nimble Diver with his side  
Cuts through the working waves, that he may fetch  
His dearly-earned pearl, which God did hide  
On purpose from the ventrous wretch ;  
That he might save his life, and also hers,  
Who with excessive pride  
Her own destruction and his danger wears.

The last line anticipates the habit of Mallarmé, and represents the Metaphysical technique at its happiest.

He can make a whole poem of juxtaposed images, as in the sonnet on Prayer, or in *Dotage*, where he describes the pleasures of the world :

False glozing pleasures, casks of happinesse,  
Foolish night-fires, women and children's wishes,  
Chases in Arras, gilded emptinesse,  
Shadows well mounted, dreams in a career,  
Embroider'd lyes, nothing between two dishes.

He does not entirely avoid naive absurdities :

Most things move th'underjaw ; the Crocodile not.  
Most things sleep lying ; th'Elephant leans or stands.

This is part of a long poem arguing the power of God from Design and Providence : the reader of seventeenth-century writers is often obliged to wonder how clever men could be so silly, and all one's efforts to understand the mental climate do not provide an answer. But such lapses are comparatively rare in Herbert. Finally, he excels our other religious poets not only in taste and shapeliness but in variety of feeling, which is reflected in the unsurpassed variety of his prosodic forms.

I have tried to summarise my sense of Herbert's poetry by illustration rather than by comment. It remains only to emphasise again the excellence of this edition. Canon Hutchinson has been fortunate in having few serious textual problems to resolve. He follows the Bodleian manuscript (which is not an autograph) verbally, but uses the first edition in spelling, punctu-

ation, etc. His lavish notes, with their richness in references to the most obscure sources, afford invaluable illumination. His refusal, moreover, to accept the order arbitrarily decided by G. H. Palmer in the best of preceding editions, seems to be based on excellent reasons. One line, on which he provides no note, kept me puzzling for a long while :—" Clouds cool by heat and baths by cooling boil." At last I surmised it to mean : " Clouds are dissolved by the hot sun into cooling showers, and cold baths make men feel warm afterwards." I am far from certain that this conclusion is correct.

## ANCIENT ROME

How far M. Carcopino's book\* will be useful to scholars I am quite unqualified to judge, but to the common reader like myself it is of the greatest interest. It can be particularly recommended to school libraries for the enlivenment it would bring to the tedious though rewarding study of the Latin tongue. The author, who was Director of the *Ecole française de Rome* gives an account of how men and women lived in Rome round about A.D. 100. His book lacks the distinction of Dill's great work on Roman Society, but it is never either dull or vulgar ; it makes a useful supplement to Dill, being concerned less with the thoughts of men than with their physical environment and habits. The sections dealing with population and housing, based on the latest epigraphical and archæological evidence, are specially interesting. M. Carcopino gives a vivid description, which the illustrations in the book amplify, of the many-storeyed tenements into which the vast majority of the Romans were crowded like modern slum-dwellers. Within a comparatively small area the Rome of the Antonines must have contained, he reckons, about 1,200,000 souls. Of these over one-third lived on public charity, with free baths as well as free bread and free circuses. This parasitic and demoralised populace was maintained, like the few thousand multi-millionaires, at the expense partly of the artisans and

\* *Daily Life in Ancient Rome.* By Jérôme Carcopino. Translated by E. O. Lorimer and annotated by Henry T. Rowell.

slaves, chiefly of the countryside and the distant parts of the Empire. The working day of the artisan was only of six to seven hours, and there were already under Claudius 150 public holidays in each year, a number that rose to 200 in the fourth century. In the city of Rome, even the slaves, I think, flourished upon the exploitation of the provinces. For as often as not they could acquire, from the gold perpetually pouring into the city, pickings enough to purchase their freedom and to become bourgeois. Nor must the reader forget that this book deals exclusively with the Urbs, which was not so much the heart of the Empire as an exhausting cancer in its vitals. Doubtless some of its inhabitants lived the good life, but we must look chiefly to the provinces for evidence of that civic ardour and tranquil good sense which we associate with the Roman name.

After reading M. Carcopino, I am more than ever convinced that the general opinion that we have of Rome is extremely delusive ; it is based upon misconceptions which grew up during the Renaissance, and are still handed on from one generation to another. Indeed, I would be so rash as to suggest that the chief justification for learning Latin is to be found not in the achievements of Rome but in the fruitful results to European civilisation that were brought about by a misunderstanding of those achievements. In morality, in literature, in philosophy, in science, in architecture, the performance of Rome is inferior to that of Greece, France, Italy and England—to say nothing of China. (And it must be remembered that we count as Romans men from three continents). Transport was probably the technique for which the Romans were most remarkable : Trajan could travel across Europe as rapidly as Napoleon. Another invention which cannot be denied to them is that of the gladiatorial games—a custom more disgusting even than the mass sacrifices of the Mexicans, who at least believed that their cruelty was necessary in order to placate the gods. The Romans contributed to civilisation chiefly by spreading over half Europe the ideas of the Jews and the Greeks—two peoples whom they particularly despised. But the Latin language and history remain of capital importance because of the part they have played in the construction of mediaeval and modern Europe. Adam de St. Victor, St. Thomas Aquinas, Chaucer, Dante, Petrarch, Bacon, Spinoza, Milton, Landor—these are but a few names taken from the long and illustrious roll of those who have delighted to use the tongue of ancient Rome. And to suggest its influence upon vernacular literature one needs to mention the names only of Ben Jonson, Racine, Dryden, Pope, Voltaire, Gibbon,

Goethe and Baudelaire. In architecture and painting the idea of Rome has similarly generated innumerable works vastly superior to any achievement of classical Rome—works ranging in date from the Cathedral of Autun to the Petit Trianon, from Fra Angelico and Mantegna to Ingres and even Picasso. Inevitably we tend to imagine that the Rome of Vitruvius was aesthetically comparable to the Rome of Michelangelo. But to find the equivalent of the architectural glories of the Imperial city one should perhaps examine not the Capitol or St. Peter's but the tawdry monument to Vittorio Emmanuele.

It was in Morocco, years ago, that I first caught a notion of what life in Rome may have been. Whereas the genius and sensibility of successive generations in Europe have constructed a Rome in their own image, the world of Islam, to which Rome is hardly more than a name, has perpetuated, I believe, many of the most conspicuous features of Roman life. As I watched the Moors in their white robes strutting and riding through the narrow streets of Fez, or listening to the story-tellers in the square of Marrakesh, I surmised that there, rather than in the neat accounts by Alma Tadema or Poynter, the image of Roman life could be recognised. Repeatedly M. Carcopino draws upon Morocco for parallels, and I believe that a knowledge of the Moslem world has been invaluable to his account of Roman life—is indeed a requisite henceforward to be demanded of all who seek to describe Roman society. This belief is much less paradoxical than it may appear. Europe, for at least eight hundred years, has indulged an insatiable appetite for change which is unique in history, while the world of Islam has shown the conservatism normal in human societies. Having adopted the habits of the Roman provinces that it captured, it has retained them comparatively unaltered. This fact has been concealed by a few Moslem uses, such as the veils of the women, the head-coverings of the men, the horse-shoe arch and the Arab script. Look at this paragraph from M. Carcopino's book :

All communications in the city were dominated by this contrast between day and night. By day there reigned intense animation, a breathless jostle, an infernal din. The *tabernae* were crowded as soon as they opened and spread their displays into the street. Here barbers shaved their customers in the middle of the fairway. There the hawkers from Transiberina passed along, bartering their packets of sulphur matches for glass trinkets. Elsewhere the owner of a cook-shop, hoarse with calling to deaf ears, displayed his sausages piping hot in their saucepan. Schoolmasters and their pupils shouted themselves hoarse in the open air. On the one

hand, a money-changer rang his coins with the image of Nero on a dirty table, on another a beater of gold dust pounded with his shining mallet on his well-worn stone. At the cross-roads a circle of idlers gaped round a viper-tamer ; everywhere tinkers' hammers resounded and the quavering voices of beggars invoked the name of Bellona or rehearsed their adventures and misfortunes to touch the hearts of the passers-by.

Again and again one seems to be reading a description of modern life in Fez or Aleppo. The rich, for instance, lived among the slums in houses with no windows on the streets. The heating was inadequate, for except on the ground floor it came only from braziers ; despite the luxuriance of aqueducts, there was no water laid on ; and water-carriers were ubiquitous. The vast majority had to use public latrines, and filth was often emptied into the streets. Fires were no less common than in the Stamboul of the Sultans. There was little furniture ; even the rich slept, without sheets, in their day clothes. Men never shaved themselves ; the barber used depilatories and tweezers as well as the razor ; and both sexes repaired regularly for cleanliness to the hammam. It was customary to wash the feet when entering a house. Women took little part in selling goods, and the men also did most of the marketing. Education was largely a matter of learning texts by heart. Meals were taken in a reclining position, and belching was a polite sign of appreciation. Gambling was endemic, but chess also was very popular. Slaves rose to be the chief ministers of the ruler, to the disgust of the well-born whom they frequently condemned to expropriation or death. The Emperor was obliged to neglect his graver duties to judge private law-suits. There was great vagueness about the time of day (hours being of different lengths according to the season). Astrologers and fortune-tellers of all sorts carried great weight. Eunuchs were highly prized. Though there was no polygamy, the rich could maintain a seraglio of slaves purchased for their beauty. The Romans, moreover, seem, like the Moors and Persians in more recent times, to have had a natural taste for what is politely known as unnatural vice.

No doubt a scholar, familiar equally with the evidence about ancient Rome and with the surviving customs of the urban Moslem, could multiply such parallels. Is not the *Satyricon* a succession of scenes that might come from *The Arabian Nights*, described by a more sophisticated writer ? And to find equivalents to the Cæsars, as described by Suetonius, one must look to the courts not of European monarchs but of the Shahs, Khalifs and Sultans. It is of course ways of life, not ways of thought, that

Islam has, I suggest, inherited from Rome. Moslem society is in a hundred ways excellent, but has it produced historians comparable in narrative or analysis with Tacitus, poets comparable in sobriety and elegance with Horace and Catullus? It is Christendom that has inherited what was most valuable in the Roman society, the codification of law, the skill in administration, the religious tolerance, and the high status of women, as well as the moral, intellectual and æsthetic values that Rome has transmitted to us from Palestine and Greece. The prestige of Latin may be based partly upon a legend, but this legend has animated most of what is cardinal in our civilisation, ranging from the august internationalism of the Catholic Church to the Palladian mansions that embellish our countryside, from the language of the most gifted modern peoples to the contempt for tyranny that now gives dignity to our resolution in self-defence.

### ARCHBISHOP MAGEE

I HAVE already confessed to an odd, frivolous taste for the biographies of Victorian ecclesiastics. Presumably everyone requires some light reading, and such books, I find, are as exciting as Mrs. Christie's or Mr. Nicholas Blake's, and vastly more amusing than Mr. Wodehouse's. With great enjoyment, therefore, I have lately been reading Canon Macdonnell's *Life of Archbishop Magee*. I cannot recommend this except to the very few who share my taste, yet these two volumes, issued in 1896 by a publisher called Isbister, do shed some light on human nature and particularly on *Homo Victoriensis*. Magee was, I think, the ablest as he was certainly the most eloquent of Victorian bishops. Witty, unbuttoned, and uncommonly good company, he was highly popular except with bigots. Born in 1821, the son of an Irish clergyman and the grandson of an Irish archbishop, he took Holy Orders as it were by inheritance. To-day a higher view is taken of the priestly office, and moreover the Church offers fewer and much smaller prizes, so that a particular vocation is needed to make a brilliant man into a parson. In those days it



was common for clever and ambitious young men to enter an ecclesiastical career. Magee remained absolutely solid in his faith, but he had the temperament of a barrister or a politician rather than of a priest. An Evangelical complained that a sermon of his "had not Gospel enough in it to save a tom-tit," and on the other hand his Irish upbringing deprived him of all sympathy with the Puseyites. (There is a comically obtuse letter from him to a clergyman harassed by a young lady who wanted to make him her confessor.) He was moreover opposed to the extreme views both of the Higher Critics and of the literalists. Whatever discrepancies and apparent contradictions there might be in Holy Scripture, were there, he concluded, by God's special providence. They served as discipline to the faith of the humble, and as stumbling-blocks to the proud, and it was therefore good for us that they should exist. . . . With such ingenuity at his command he was bound to prosper.

From 1849 to 1860 he served as a curate at Bath, and his preaching gained a wide reputation. In 1859 he received the offer of a living, which inflicted upon him "a mental struggle, the sorest I have ever gone through, and which leaves me at this moment so physically and mentally prostrate that I can hardly bring myself to write at length all those reasonings which brought me to my conclusion." His conclusion was to decline. (The living was in the wildest part of Donegal.) Six months later he was offered Quebec Chapel in London: "Oh, how I shrink from the anxiety and responsibility of the coming decision. We must pray earnestly for guidance and help." He was guided to accept. (It was "confessedly the most prominent and important post for a preacher in London.") But his health failed him, and soon he accepted the rectory of Enniskillen. In 1864 he was made Dean of Cork. Four years later his growing impatience with the narrowness of his Church of Ireland colleagues induced him to apply to Disraeli for an English living. "Very reverend Sir," the answer came "I regret that I cannot comply with your request, for I felt it my duty"—Magee gloomily turned over the page—"to recommend her Majesty to nominate you to the vacant see of Peterborough." As usual a letter confided to a friend his feelings: "I could not have imagined beforehand how much of dismay and actual pain the reception of a Prime Minister's offer of a bishopric would cause." He overcame his dismay. Finally, in 1891, Lord Salisbury offered him the Archbishopric of York: "You may imagine how *dazed* I felt by such an offer, accompanied by a request for a 'yes' or 'no' by telegram. . . . It was a tremendous decision

to make at a few hours' notice. . . . After such prayer and consultation as I could give, I telegraphed 'yes.'"

Magee was not physically strong, and one would accept all these hesitations more readily were it not for an incident in 1864. The Bishop of Meath was dying. Magee expected to succeed him, but suddenly the Government fell. "The Bishopric of Meath would, I believe, have been mine had Dr. Singer's death taken place just three weeks sooner than it did. Three weeks of an expiring, and seemingly useless, life lay between me and all that the bishopric implies." One has an uneasy feeling that if the seemingly useless life had not been thus prolonged, we should have had a letter telling us of the dismay, the pain, the consultations, the prayers, the sore mental struggle, that had been necessary before the bishopric could be accepted.

"What an eternal thing is humbug!" as Magee was once driven to declare. But his own attitude to preferment is interesting just because he was not a common humbug. He was a good, amiable and sensible man with a powerful intellect. Indeed, he shocked his contemporaries by his unconventionality and candour. In nineteenth-century England the power of man to deceive himself, always great, seems to have been slightly abnormal. Politicians, no less than ecclesiastics, wrestled upon their knees for hours before accepting the posts for which they had been tirelessly intriguing. Mr. Gladstone, whom I fervently admire, was genuinely persuaded that he longed to retire from politics, and that he continued till the age of eighty-three in the vexatious exercise of power only because he was indispensable to his fellow-citizens. Our motives, like our faults, are more easily concealed from ourselves than from our friends. Moreover, when conventions require a man to feel a particular emotion, he manages, I believe, as a rule to feel it genuinely, for our feelings are more at our command than is generally supposed. And Victorian convention demanded a number of particular sentiments. In the latter part of the eighteenth century tears were always on tap—Chatham and Pitt, for instance, habitually wept. The Victorians were similarly gifted with sincere misgivings.

The other point about Magee that fascinates me is his altruistic gloom. He had a rare capacity for enjoyment, and his career was a series of triumphs, but he was in constant distress; the country, he felt sure, was going to the dogs. He began his tenure of the see of Peterborough, which lasted twenty-two years, with a speech in the Lords denouncing the calamitous disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. Lord Derby, himself a great veteran of oratory, declared that in his experience the eloquence

of this speech had never been surpassed and very rarely equalled. Henceforward the bishops were always pushing Magee forward to advocate their more unpopular opinions, till he complained that he was "the gamecock of the Episcopal Bench." (The other peers, he said, treated the bishops as parvenus.) He made a brave attack on a bill for suppressing vivisection, and another upon a bill for introducing the form of tyranny euphemistically called "Local Option." "I think it better," he said, "that England should be free than compulsorily sober;" and there were yelps from every fanatic in the three kingdoms. Increasingly he became a prey to the gloomiest forebodings. Archbishop Tait, he wailed, was an infatuated Erastian; anti-clericalism was spreading in the Universities; the clergy were more and more taken up with "ritualistic gewgaws"; Mr. Gladstone, though totally unfitted to rule, had obtained another majority; our democracy was ignorant, feeble and selfish beyond all other democracies; and dissenters were demanding that the bells of the Established Church should toll at their funerals. "The England of thirty years hence," he wrote in 1878, "will surely be the nastiest residence conceivable for anyone, save infidel prigs and unsexed women." The House elected in 1886, he declared, was Republican: "I give the Church of England two parliaments to live through." And then all this talk of Socialism! Christ had said "My Kingdom is not of this World"; it was therefore a huge mistake to turn the kingdoms of this world into His Kingdom. Disestablishment would be followed by revolution, and he only hoped he might be spared to spend his few surviving disestablished years on the Lake of Como.

The groans of nineteenth-century notabilities now seem ironically amusing. The Paris of the Nineteenth Century provided for the privileged the most agreeable and stimulating life, I think, that has ever been obtainable upon this planet; yet Flaubert and Goncourt never ceased whining. They had seen, it is true, a humiliating defeat and an alarming revolution. But the English knew an ever-growing prosperity, and how incessant were their complaints! The disestablishment of the Church of Ireland was, in fact, the harmless and overdue abolition of an insolent anomaly; the spread of ritualism produced—to put it at its lowest—an immense amount of innocent pleasure; even the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill would have legalised only marriages that were permitted throughout Catholic Europe. If Bishop Magee found all this so agitating, what, one may ask, would be his feelings if he had been born seventy years later and saw what we are seeing? (There are moments, I notice,

when one longs to drop bombs not on, but near, almost all the eminent Victorians.) I fancy that Bishop Magee, if he were now alive, would indeed be gloomy, but not a whit gloomier than he actually was. Reasons for dismay may have become more cogent, but the causes of dismay remain the same—for most of them are usually subjective. Groaning over the indisputably horrible present, alarmed by the potentially more horrible future, we may envy what we imagine to have been the placid lives of our grandparents. But their anxiety, it seems, was hardly less harrowing than ours. Moreover, compared with the immense majority of our fellow Europeans, compared even with ourselves two years ago, we, too, are in fact very enviable. We have the right to be amused by the lamentations of a Magee, but are we not also a little ridiculous if we indulge in self-pity? It is at any rate a satisfaction to draw from the life of so great a preacher something resembling a moral lesson.

## PROUST

My friend Mr. Cyril Connolly, in *Horizon*, the review that he so admirably edits, has decided that Proust, whom he has been re-reading, is a hoax. He complains that Proust was an invalid, lacking the sense of proportion without which no masterpiece can be achieved. But the exquisite shapeliness that he requires is absent from many of the supreme masterpieces: this is all a matter of temperament, no doubt, but I admire Shakespeare more than Racine, and Balzac more than Flaubert, just as I admire Proust more than Anatole France. Mr. Connolly admits, however, that war may distort literary judgment. For my part I do not now find my pleasure in Proust diminished; I have continued during the war my habit of reading him, and now for the first time have tried the admirable English translation, which has been issued in a uniform and convenient edition.\*

That Proust's fiction is uneven I agree, and owing to it being all one book one cannot so easily neglect the weaker parts as one

\* *Remembrance of Things Past*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Stephen Hudson.

can neglect the less successful novels of Balzac or Henry James. Mr. Connolly says the book is half a million words too long—its length, I believe, is about a million and a half; I should say about a hundred thousand could advantageously be pruned. But I can hardly understand how anyone who has acquired a taste for Proust could lose it. For Proust, like Boswell and Miss Austen, makes us intimate with a number of fascinating characters, who come to interest us no less than our friends in the flesh. I continue to enjoy meeting Saint-Loup and the Duc de Guermantes very much as I enjoy meeting, or hearing gossip about, Mr. Connolly. No novelist has made his characters more real to us than Proust, and we know much more about them than about any other figures in fiction. For this reason alone I believe him to be incomparably the greatest writer who has flourished in my lifetime. Moreover, the relations of the characters with one another are so handled as to form an unparalleled study of social life. Much that is irrelevant has been written about Proust's snobbery; whatever his personal conduct, the one fault of his picture of the Faubourg is over-harshness. Many persons may be vexed by the punctilio with which he studied and explained nuances of social status. But such nuances are facts, even if they are unpleasant facts, and realism is not a method applicable only to the petty burgess and the workman. In my opinion realism has never been more profitably used than in Proust's delineation of an aristocracy that has neither political power nor an educated taste.

His other gifts, if secondary, are hardly less remarkable. There is in him a great impressionist, whose rendering, not only of things seen but of things heard and things felt, is aesthetically as lovely and significant as the work of Renoir and Debussy. There is in him a great discoverer of truths, whose patient pursuit of the general laws governing human behaviour and sentiment place him with La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère. Here I must mention far the most important critical work that has yet appeared on Proust, now unluckily out of print—M. Albert Feuillerat's *Comment Marcel Proust a composé ses romans* (Yale University Press). This shows how, during the seventeen years he spent upon his novel, Proust altered his attitude and method. The first draft of the novel was a shimmering transcription of memories effected in a pictorial and melodious style. Then he began interpolating sentences, paragraphs, scenes, whole long chapters, till the final version was nearly three times as long. These additions were chiefly analytical and expository. It is as if Monet's style had been replaced by Cézanne's.

Had Proust written seven novels instead of rewriting one novel in seven books, we should have assisted happily at the development that like every artist he underwent. But we now have, as it were, fragments from *The Portrait of a Lady* interspersed with fragments from *The Ambassadors*. The result is not a carefully unified construction like St. Paul's, but a rambling edifice, resembling Canterbury in its surprises and inconsistencies. The purist has excellent reason to complain that this alteration of technique and conception has marred the aesthetic unity of the book. Yet I believe that much more has been gained than lost. Since reading M. Feuillerat, I fancy that I can very often distinguish whether I am reading Proust's first or second manner, even in the later volumes, the first draft of which is not available. (M. Feuillerat has done very ingenious detective work on these lines.) But this does not impoverish the experience I derive from the book. It is perhaps even appropriate that Time should thus have altered and striated a book of which Time is the subject.

Proust's intention from the first was to express the modification of character, in both the individual and society, continually being wrought by the passage of the years. The self of to-day, which can hardly understand the self of twenty years ago, will in turn be a mysterious stranger to the self of twenty years hence. To treat this theme he planned his book in the form of a man remembering, until at the end he suddenly receives the inspiration to make of these memories a work of art. (The book is described as the history of a vocation.) This scheme enabled the author to include everything that interested him. Thus in him we find not only a creator of character, a painter, and an analyst, but as it were a diarist or memoir-writer, like Goncourt and Saint Simon. We listen to the meditations and discoveries of a man conspicuous for intelligence and perceptiveness, for knowledge and aesthetic sensibility.

Proust was no less difficult than devoted as a friend—touchy, plaintive, suspicious, excessive in his demands, though incomparably sympathetic, generous and intuitive. But to the reader he becomes a friend who has no fault—unless it be an occasional tendency to prose about his unhappy amours, a friend to whom we listen enraptured as to the most rewarding talker there has ever been.

Time, as Proust would have expected, does alter our feelings about his book. If it has turned Mr. Connolly's *engouement* to tedium and disillusion, I find my own love not diminishing but focusing on different aspects. Like most of my friends, when I first read Proust, I was impressed chiefly by the delineation of

love and jealousy. To-day I revolt against his notion that love is always and necessarily unhappy, and still more against his obsession with jealousy. On the other hand I have come to think him one of the supreme comic writers, the Molière or Ben Jonson of the novel. The reader that I used to be discovered in Proust the reflection of his own preoccupations ; the reader I have become discovers a reflection of his own detachment. Just as I now feel impatience with Proust's anguish over incidents that he suspects in Albertine's past, so to-day I cannot understand how once I allowed myself to be made miserable so fruitlessly. (Proust's elaborate diagnosis of love as a malady of the imagination is definitely an addition to knowledge.) On the other hand *Le Temps Retrouvé* now seems to me, as it did not before, at least as valuable as any other volume, because the present "I" is approaching Proust's age, and can perceive the astonishing justice of his remarks about the disappearance of youth, the strange effect of superimposed memories, and the other consequences of the passage of time. The descriptions in this volume of the war, incidentally, have a new interest ; and one re-reads more appreciatively the comments upon the black-out, sirens, pessimism, searchlights, love in shelters, and hostesses brimming with inside information.

Proust's pursuit of truth was deflected by a grotesque and glaringly subjective misanthropy, which grew on him unceasingly. Not only do all the characters deteriorate as they grow older, but—as M. Feuillerat has shown—the interpolated comments upon them are consistently disobliging. Fools become knaves ; an action originally described as kind is given a base motive. Proust had never believed in mutual love, and in his later years fell into the illusion that there was no such thing as gratitude or friendship. The cause, I suggest, was that he had too much heart. No friend could live up to the extravagant standards that Proust expected and did in fact himself maintain. Compared with him, everybody did turn out to be insensitive, self-centred and heartless. At last he seems positively to have revelled in what seemed to him the unkindness of his friends, rather as Charlus wished to believe that the harmless shop-assistants and waiters whom he found in Jupien's house were pimps and assassins. His bitterness and disappointment overflowed through countless codicils into every crevice of his work. Apart from his mother and grandmother (who stand like a Greek chorus or donors in an altar-piece outside the action), and from Elstir and Vinteuil (who play small part except as authors of their works), there is not one personage in the book who is ordinarily decent. I am

not referring to the way in which Proust, with a lunatic destructiveness, suddenly decided that the most improbable characters in his book were homosexual : this may be taken as a symbol of his disappointment with friendship, but I think it rather the unlucky result of sexual obsession, which increasingly persuaded him that his own tastes were almost universal. Equally untrue to experience are the ubiquitous selfishness and malice. An extravagance, which M. Feuillerat justly compares with Balzac's, grew upon Proust, as in the seclusion of his cork-lined room he pinned page upon page on to his old manuscript. The world of his imagination grew increasingly remote from actuality, its personages larger than life, their behaviour more chimerical. For my part, while I deplore the misanthropy, I enjoy the fantasy : it is in the great comic tradition to invent monsters.

Proust's interest in his characters is so passionate and infectious that one can accept the improbabilities and overlook the misanthropy. The main obstacle to the enjoyment of Proust is Albertine. We have all we need of jealousy and unhappy love in the amours of Swann, Saint-Loup, and Charlus. What is worse, Albertine is the one impalpable character. She has no stable identity ; her eyes vary between blue and black, she is plebeian and bourgeois, ignorant and cultivated, impulsive and a mistress of dissimulation. One concludes that she is at least a couple of girls as well as half a dozen young men, a composite but unintegrated portrait of all the adolescents with whom the author had fallen in love. If all that concerns her were removed, we should lose some very beautiful passages, some rich comedy, and many profound observations, but the book, I believe, would be much improved. Indeed, to anyone about to embark upon Proust—and what voyage could be more delightful ?—I should recommend reading *Swann's Way*, then going straight to *The Guermantes Way* and *The Cities of the Plain*, reading of *The Captive* only the long description of the party at the Verdurins' for Morel, and then passing to *Time Regained*. After this, the reader will wish to tackle the omitted parts, and will find in them many rewards that he might have missed if he had read them in their appointed place. This may seem a barbarous way of approaching a masterpiece ; but the truth, at least as I increasingly see it, is that literature is a very impure art, to which the rigidly aesthetic criterions that apply to painting, and even more to music, can be applied only with a great sacrifice of pleasure.



## LANDOR

IN his book on W. W. Story, Henry James introduces an account of Landor with a fine passage about pursuing the traces of illustrious men :

Strange and special the effect, in Italy, of the empty places (and they are many) that we stand and wonder in to-day for the sake of the vanished, the English poets ; the irresistible reconstruction, to the all but baffled vision, of unrecoverable presences and aspects, the conscious, shining, mocking void, sad somehow with excess of serenity . . . There they still stand, at any rate, the old cool houses—Peschatelli, Belvedere, Spanocchi-Sergardi, Alberti, Gori, Borghese—on their communicating slopes, behind their overclambered walls and their winding accommodating lanes ; there they stand in the gladness of their gardens (congruous haunts of delightfully named young gardeners, Adone and Narciso) and in that wondrous mountain ring which seems to contract and expand, as with the time of day and the state of the air, colour deepens or swoons.

These words now have a new melancholy, for the houses and graves of Keats, Shelley, and Landor are unattainable by us, in the re-enslaved country whose liberty was so close to their hearts. As one who loves Italy only less than France, I find in Landor's lovely sense of the Italian scene something of the pleasure tasted by the enviable James when wandering among the Tuscan villas.

I often wished myself away, thinking of friends in Florence, of music, of painting, of our villeggiatura at the vintage-time, whether in the green and narrow glades of Pratolino, with lofty trees above us, and little rills unseen, and little bells about the necks of sheep and goats, tinkling together ambiguously ; or amid the grey quarries or under the majestic walls of ancient Fiesole ; or down in the woods of the Doccia, where the cypresses are of such a girth that, when a youth stands against one of them, and a maiden stands opposite, and they clasp it, their hands at the time do little more than meet. Beautiful scenes, on which Heaven smiles eternally, how often has my heart ached for you ! He who hath lived in this country can enjoy no distant one. He breathes here another air ; he lives more life ; a brighter sun invigorates his studies, and serener stars influence his repose.

Browning alone has written of Italy with equal feeling.

A bearded old man, shabby as a beggar, throwing his dinner out of the window, abandoned by his affluent children to the care of strangers—such was the Lear-like end of Landor, the heir of great estates as well as one of the finest writers of his time. Though subject to no sordid dissipation, he may be thought the

architect of his own misfortunes, a man dilapidated by an excess no less of generosity than of arrogance. Ill luck has dogged him beyond the grave. It is not merely that he is less read, I think, than any other writer of his stature. This he would not resent : " If I had a thousand readers I should be quite out of conceit with myself—for it is impossible that so large a body of people can judge correctly of what is excellent." " I shall dine late," he prophesied, " but the dining-room will be well-lighted, the guests few but select." The guests are doubtless select, but the dining-room is lit only by smoky tapers—there is no good book on Landor. Forster's *Life* is a wretched affair ; Sidney Colvin's, in the *English Men of Letters* series, is honourable but ill-informed. And now comes Mr. Malcolm Elwin,\* who has evidently taken great trouble with disappointing results. Mr. Elwin is not remarkable for style, exactitude or judgment. But admirers of Landor will have to read this exasperating work, for Mr. Elwin, while pandering to the popular dislike of scholarship by omitting his references, has included much material that was suppressed by Forster or unknown to him.

Landor is the most naturally classical of English writers. Some of the sentiments—in *Pericles* and *Aspasia*, for instance—belong, I agree, to Greuze or to Lady Blessington's *Book of Beauty*. (Landor often inflicts his maidens with a priggery that lightens into an even more tiresome archness.) But the setting and the diction are unparalleled in English. Arbutus and dittany, garlands and porticoes and fountains, are not to Landor the frigid literary apparatus of the eighteenth-century poetaster—they are indigenous to the climate of his mind. Though never in Sicily, he recognised in the Tuscan groves the ways of life and the images with which Theocritus had caught his schoolboy imagination. These he made his own, so that alike in prose and verse he writes " under where red Priapus rears His club amid the junipers." He lived in Italy from 1815 to 1835, and again from 1859 to his death in 1864. During the interval he chose Bath for his home, where the colonnade of the Royal Crescent and the pilasters of the Circus echoed the grandeur of the Italian scene, giving to his language the serenity lacking in his life.

Many a froward axiom, many an inhumane thought, hath arisen from sitting inconveniently, from hearing a few unpleasant sounds, from the confinement of a gloomy chamber, or from the want of symmetry in it. We are not aware of this, until we find an exemption from it in groves, on promontories, or along the sea-shore, or wherever else we meet Nature face to face, undisturbed and solitary.

\* *Savage Landor*. By Malcolm Elwin.

Extravagantly impetuous and undisciplined, Landor was never out of trouble. He volunteered as a private in the Spanish army to fight dictatorship ; he involved himself, less engagingly, in debts and law-suits ; he drove his wife into a querulous hypochondria ; he spoiled his children only to earn their contempt. The catalogue of his follies is tedious. He was the most easily angered of men, though he placed politeness among the cardinal virtues. It is fair to add that Emerson, who from hearsay had gained "an impression of Achillean wrath—an untameable petulance," found, as others did, that "courtesy veiled that haughty mind, and he was the most patient and gentle of hosts."

Since we do not suffer from the violences of the man, why is Landor so little frequented a writer ? For one thing, his opinions in themselves gain him no adherents. A republican who liked to call himself a Conservative, he despised democracy as vigorously as he hated tyranny ; he had neither faith in Christianity nor zeal in scepticism. In literature, similarly, he was no partisan. Out of loyalty to Southey, with almost all of whose opinions he disagreed, he attacked Byron ; when Wordsworth complained that the prose of the *Imaginary Conversations* was too full of images, he retorted, all too crushingly, that while prose would bear a great deal of poetry, poetry would sink and swoon under a moderate rate of prose. He refused to meet Shelley—to his subsequent deep regret. Browning looked after his old age, and applauded in his work the display of "the rarest intellectual powers that were ever brought together in one man." Yet it is difficult not to see a glance at Browning in the following lines :

The pastoral pipe hath dropt its mellow lay,  
And shepherds in their contests only try  
Who best can puzzle. Come, Theocritus,  
Come, let us lend a shoulder to the wheel  
And help to lift it from this depth of sand.

A second obstacle to Landor's popularity is that he wrote much too much. From the four large volumes of his verse in the Chapman and Hall collected edition only some twenty poems exquisitely emerge—masterpieces in a studio littered with abandoned attempts, improvised sketches and completed failures. Though born in 1775—five years later than Wordsworth—Landor is situated by his classical tastes with an earlier generation. These few flawless poems represent indeed what the eighteenth century might have attained, if it had raised a poet with gifts comparable to those of Fragonard and of Haydn. His prose also is most readily enjoyed in such an anthology as that made with exemplary taste by Professor Ernest de Selincourt for the World's Classics.

But this contains only prose ; and moreover there is room for another volume of shorter extracts from the less consistently good *Conversations* and from *Pericles and Aspasia*. Landor is always breaking into magnificent and Pentelican phrases. Here are a few :

The voice comes deepest from the sepulchre, and a great name has its roots in the dead body.

There is a gloom in deep love, as in deep water : there is a silence in it which suspends the foot, and the folded arms and the deflected head are the images it reflects.

The very beautiful rarely love at all. Those precious images are placed above the reach of the Passions. Time alone is permitted to efface them ; Time, the father of the gods, and even *their* consumer.

We fancy we suffer from ingratitude, while in reality we suffer from self-love.

A bell warbles the more mellifluously in the air when the sound of the stroke is over, and when another swims out from underneath it, and pants upon the element that gives it birth. In like manner the recollection of a thing is frequently more pleasing than the actuality ; what is harsh is dropped in the space between.

Landor's prodigality in such reflections discovers in him vast powers of intellect, of observation, of poetic imagination and of verbal music. Yet one cannot read Landor for long at a time. It is as if wisdom and beauty required the alloy of a baser metal. The most essential quality in prose, I believe, is that each sentence should make one eager to read its successor ; and Landor rarely achieved this. The personages, whether tribunes or cardinals, virgins or courtesans, are as unvarious as caryatids. Each speaks with the voice of Landor, and every period is static and final. "How limpid," we exclaim, "how melodious, how profound!" and, as we say this, a tom-tit outside the window or even a newspaper on a chair distracts our attention. I, at least, never open a volume of Landor without being startled by his excellence—and never put it down without a shameful feeling of release. But, in the interim, I have been upon the heights. Though the rarity of the air may have been exhausting, I have moved through sunlit spaces where the only shadows are cast by olive-trees and the steles of heroes ; courage and benignity have been made graceful to me so that I have understood the Hellenic tie between goodness and beauty ; I have witnessed the embraces of athletes and hamadryads, and profited by the hopes of poets, the disillusionment of statesmen ; I have heard a music in the Lydian mode and bees hesitant above the thyme ; and I have brought back to the daily untidiness of life some vestiges of

insight into a world august, and none the less valid for being imaginary, in which wise men and laughing girls converse upon Olympus, anticipating our proudest wishes for a more civil and delightful destiny.

## MR. GLADSTONE

THE writings of Dr. and Mrs. Hammond have probably had more practical influence in this country than those of any other living historian. No one, unless he were abnormally deficient in common humanity, could read their accounts of popular misery between 1760 and 1854 without pity, indignation, and a passionate desire to reduce the vast area of distress still caused by capitalist anarchy. In his new book\* Dr. Hammond is concerned with a subject that may appear less relevant. But in fact the Irish question, which in the fifty years before the last war occupied the energies of English politicians so continuously, and, one may think, so disproportionately, combined the two most important features of modern politics—nationalism and the class-struggle. To-day the claim of Ireland to be a self-governing nation is generally acknowledged, and the younger generation of Conservatives must wonder at the blindness of all their party leaders from Pitt to Disraeli, Salisbury, and Balfour. The people of Great Britain had no quarrel with the Irish nation; and though religious and racial differences greatly complicated the issue, fundamentally this was a class-struggle between starving peasants and rich landlords. The Conservatives believed that the rights of property were more important than the right not to starve. Indeed it was this belief that made them Conservatives.

So far the economic interpretation is entirely just. But soon a point comes where it ceases to apply. When the Liberal Party split over Home Rule at the election of 1886, the majority of working-men voters, as Dr. Hammond points out, "followed Gladstone and not Chamberlain, though Gladstone offered them nothing but Home Rule, and Chamberlain offered them social reforms." Moreover, Mr. Gladstone's own devotion to the Irish

\* *Gladstone and the Irish Nation.* By J. L. Hammond.

cause must be explained in terms not of economics but of character. It is the capital merit of Dr. Hammond's book that it contains, besides the best account of the Irish question between 1869 and 1894, the most perceptive analysis of Mr. Gladstone that has yet been made.

The sufferings of the agricultural proletariat in Ireland, like those of the industrial proletariat in England, were due not only to the rapacity of the propertied class, but to the accepted theories of the time. The doctrine of *laissez faire* in industry was not a mere excuse for sweating invented by the manufacturers, it was a justified revolt against the paralysing effect upon trade caused by ill-conceived State interference. Similarly the peasant, Dr. Hammond points out, was considered an obsolete figure and an economic embarrassment. The Government held that "a society that kept its peasants was losing its place in the world of man." Pitt and Peel probably believed this then as honestly as Stalin does now, but the results were appalling. "In ten years"—Peel is speaking—"252,000 peasant homes are destroyed and a million and a half of the Irish people cross the Atlantic." (As late as 1886 Lord Salisbury still flattered himself that the best solution of the Irish problem was to expel the Irish from their own country.) Oppression, as always, led to lawlessness: and English Conservatives, all through the nineteenth century and up to the last war, obstinately clung to a futile remedy. In 1886 the two alternative solutions were put forward: Mr. Gladstone introduced his first Home Rule Bill, and Lord Salisbury asked for twenty years' "resolute government." Lord Salisbury won; the solution was applied in the most favourable circumstances. And when the Unionists at last fell in 1905, Ireland was "not less but more self-conscious than she had been in 1885; more self-conscious and more Irish."

In the first half of his book Dr. Hammond explains why Mr. Gladstone was converted to Home Rule; in the second, why he failed to achieve it. Critics of Mr. Gladstone, from Lord Salisbury onwards, have repeatedly attributed his conversion not to principle but to greed for office. He decided in its favour, they say, only when he could no longer govern without the support of the Irish Members. *Prima facie* this view is improbable: he was a shrewd politician, and knew that Home Rule would split his party—there was in fact no surer way of losing office than by adopting this policy. Moreover, there is documentary proof that he honestly, if rather ingenuously, hoped that Home Rule would be granted by the Tories. He respected Salisbury as a Churchman who had often shown wisdom in foreign affairs,

and Salisbury had empowered Carnarvon to hold conversations with Parnell. (Balfour afterwards lied about this in the House.) Mr. Gladstone, so far from seeking to outbid his opponents for Nationalist support, repeatedly advised Parnell to negotiate with the Conservatives, on the ground that these would have little opposition to face in either House if they introduced a Home Rule Bill. Nobody, I think, after reading Dr. Hammond's book, can again accuse Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy of opportunism.

But could he, by showing greater wisdom, have passed a Home Rule Bill himself? This is a trickier question, and Dr. Hammond's passionate admiration for Mr. Gladstone does not affect his impartiality in considering it. The obstacles were enormous. Probably no subject in nineteenth and twentieth century English politics has aroused such violent opposition as Home Rule. *The Times* fought malignantly against all concessions to the Irish. The Conservative leaders were little nicer in their methods: when Parnell denounced Pigott's forgeries, the judges appointed were notoriously strong opponents of Home Rule; the Attorney-General appeared for *The Times*, and W. H. Smith, the Leader of the House, had a consultation with the proprietor of *The Times* about the procedure to be adopted. The Irish were rebels, and there was no need, therefore, to preserve the impartiality of the Law. Salisbury and Balfour rivalled one another in the causticity of their attacks upon the Irish, and the Queen, in her passion, forgot her constitutional duty. Besides these traditional enemies, the mass of Mr. Gladstone's educated supporters were alienated by Home Rule—including Huxley, Tyndall, Tennyson, Browning, Lecky, Froude, Martineau, Jowett and Herbert Spencer. Still more serious for Mr. Gladstone was the opposition of his leading colleagues. Hartington was the heir to great Irish estates, and probably could never have been converted. (Of the Parnell divorce he remarked: "I never thought anything in politics could give me such pleasure as this does." Dr. Hammond points out that Hartington himself was then living in adultery, and adds "Never in history has chivalry been at a lower ebb in the English upper classes.") John Bright, after many years of nobly championing the Irish, had been turned against them by what he considered their unforgivable ingratitude. But gravest of all was Chamberlain's hostility. Though in the light of his later history this may now seem to have been inevitable, personal animosity certainly played an important part at the time. Chamberlain was justly impatient with Mr. Gladstone's indifference to Radical measures for helping the urban proletariat: he was no less justly indignant at the slights his leader put

upon him. Chamberlain was not a Hellenist ; he was not a Churchman, or even, in Mr. Gladstone's eyes, a Christian ; finally he was not a gentleman. Perhaps Dr. Hammond rather underestimates the unlucky part played by this last consideration. Mr. Gladstone was not a snob, but Chamberlain's vulgarity of manner probably grated upon his upper-middle-class fastidiousness more than it did upon aristocrats like Salisbury and Balfour. The style in which he refused Chamberlain the Colonial Office was more wounding than the refusal itself ; and his further refusal to give Chamberlain a free hand in major reforms of Local Government was the final unwisdom. Thenceforward Chamberlain behaved worse to Mr. Gladstone than Mr. Gladstone had ever behaved to him. And largely as a result of this hostility the Irish question continued to poison political life for another thirty-five years.

Hardly less responsible for this disaster was the character of Parnell. By masterly statesmanship, he had placed Ireland solidly behind him ; by prodigious good fortune he had found as an eager ally in his plans the most powerful of contemporary Englishmen. He then acted in such a way as to alienate any man less magnanimous than Gladstone, and did in fact alienate Chamberlain. He piled error upon error. He placed his career at the mercy of an adventurer, so that his mistress should not forfeit a legacy. When the crash came, he allowed his mistress to bring counter-charges, accusing her husband of adultery with her sister, with the result that England and Ireland rang with the unedifying details of her life with Parnell. And having thus disgusted the public opinion alike of Ireland and England, he refused to retire, and accused Mr. Gladstone of not being whole-hearted in his pursuit of Home Rule. Davitt, who had lived years of martyrdom in prison for his beliefs, appealed to Parnell, but in vain :

One influence alone moved him. It was that of his mistress, who had no Irish blood and no Irish interest except her interest in Parnell's fortunes. . . . Her life for eight years had been devoted to the effort to keep Parnell's love and her aunt's fortune without endangering his political position. If Mr. Parnell retired she would appear to herself and him to have caused his ruin.

So Parnell wrecked the Home Rule movement to save his mistress's pride. And in Ireland to-day—such is the irony of history—Mrs. O'Shea is often remembered with grateful affection, and Mr. Gladstone only with contemptuous hatred.

What enabled Mr. Gladstone to recognise that the Irish were a nation, and must be treated as such, when almost all leading



Englishmen refused to face the fact? It was not that he had learnt from personal experience—incredible as it seems, he visited Ireland only once. The answer provided by Dr. Hammond is that he was a good European. As a political leader he had grave faults. He was tactful with assemblies, but inconsiderate of individuals. He humbly confessed himself to be “ censorious and fastidious ” ; and not only could he never condescend to flattery, but “ he never learnt to distinguish between out-talking a man and convincing him.” He showed “ equal readiness to fight for the shadow or the substance, a comma or a creed ” ; he showed “ obstinacy in acknowledging error and persistence in defending it.” He believed that God was taking special care of him because he had been given a mission. “ This kind of conviction gave him great strength, but it is a kind of egotism for which a man must suffer.” Yet he was never insular, as Chamberlain and Hartington were insular. “ He had so often thought of the Italian problem in the Italian sense that he could not think of the Irish problem purely in the English sense. He could not think that crime absolved a ruler from the duty of governing with justice, and that the mere repression of crime could extinguish the force of national sentiment.” His power was derived from and guided by his Christianity, and this “ was based not on the Bible alone or chiefly, but on Homer, Aristotle, Augustine, Dante and Butler. Of these the two to whom he devoted most time and study were Homer and Dante. A man whose Christianity draws its breath in such an atmosphere lives in the heart and mind of Europe.”

Gladstone saw in the world on one side power, force and violence, all the influences that divide mankind. He saw on the other the movement towards the moral unity of the world, based on mutual respect between peoples. The last great struggle in which he was engaged represented more dramatically than any other struggle in his career the dominant passion of his mind.

In our present distresses it gives one heart to read about this extraordinary man, for his faith and his hope and his charity are infectious.

*Gladstone and the Irish Nation* is the best new historical work that I have read for years. Dr. Hammond combines passionate sympathy in describing emotions with scientific impartiality in the presentation of evidence. His writing is always lucid, frequently pungent, and occasionally very eloquent. His mind is stored not only with all the relevant facts, but with a wide European culture. (He quotes, for instance, from Livy, Cicero, Tacitus, St. Augustine, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats and Bridges.) His book contains 740 pages, and I could not wish it shorter ;

though reading it is a physical labour, because the publisher has not seen fit to produce it in two volumes. To do justice in a few pages to a work so long, so important and so authoritative, is impossible. I can only recommend it with vehemence and enthusiasm.

## BEACHCOMBER

HERE is another selection from Beachcomber's column in the *Daily Express*—Lady Cabstanleigh, Mrs. Wretch, Carstairs and Narkover.\* To be serious about comedy is a ticklish job, so why not say "grand fun," and leave it at that? But the interesting thing about Beachcomber is, that, like all good satirists, he is in deadly earnest. His jokes, a great many of them, are agonised, the expression not of amusement but of hatred and indignation; his laughter comes near to hysteria. For he finds himself trapped in a civilisation which he finds entirely detestable. Here is a characteristic paragraph:

### Disquieting News for the Government.

The Government campaign for starving the destitute to death has had a serious check. A scientist has discovered that there is enough vitamin H in a boiled banana skin to keep a family of six alive for two days. The Ministry of Health goes further, and says that, by making an effort, the family of six could keep going for four days.

Another paragraph records "without comment" that three Old Etonians, after drinking too much, smashed windows at Windsor and were fined; and that three soldiers, after drinking too much, smashed windows at Dover, and were sent to prison for a year. Even his Lady Cabstanleigh and his Mrs. Wretch typify the fantastic values held up by gossip-writers and demanded by their readers. Cricket pomposities, Wimbledon, historical films, Books of the Month, Ye Olde Bungaloves, and imbecile letters like those printed at the bottom of the page on which he writes—everything, almost, which the readers of the Beaverbrook Press are fed with, is so much food for his disgust. His work on the

\* *Stuff and Nonsense*. By "Beachcomber" (J. B. Morton).

*Express*, and Low's on the *Standard*, does much to disinfect these papers, and Lord Beaverbrook is remarkable as the only Press King to pay Court Fools to insult his subjects.

So far, so good. But Beachcomber is as indiscriminately insulting as any of the Marx Brothers. "If I am wrong," he shrieks at his readers, "you are none the less fools." He envelopes everything belonging to the modern world in the same almost crazy hatred. Our science? All nonsense. Our poetry? Drivel. Our painting? Bosh. Our music? Muck. (Nor are the dead much better than the living, unless they lived a very long while ago, and were French, Italian, Spanish or Austrian.) Neutrons and Bach, feminism and Ibsen, pacifists, the "obscene" poetry of Lawrence and the "ridiculous" paintings of Picasso, are so many varied *banderillas* in the shoulders of this tormented creature. In his distress he even becomes illiterate, using "whoever" as an interrogative and "so-called" as a term of abuse (like the authoress of *Irene Idlesleigh* who referred indignantly to "the so-called Barry Pain"). He is sickened by the thought of anyone enjoying anything he himself cannot appreciate; whatever he cannot understand, he automatically detests; and the range of his understanding is, for an educated man, bewilderingly narrow. The odd thing, moreover, is that all this nausea is presented as the product of bluff common sense. Beachcomber seems, by his own account, to be a strapping man who eats and drinks and walks as heartily as he swears, the sort of man who gives "thumping great whacks on the jaw to milk-sops." Yet from his queasiness you might have supposed that he was a hyper-sensitive *Yellow Book* dyspeptic. And, like the poets of the Nineties, he takes refuge from this modern world which he cannot endure, in a beautiful imaginary Gothic past, in which there was "happy social life and general well-being of the masses." In his loyalty to this dream he cracks angry jokes even at such innovations as pasteurisation and similar processes applied to milk. And here, I suggest, his joke ceases to be a joke; and I should like to take him to a children's hospital and show him scores of small bodies twisted out of shape by surgical tuberculosis as a result of drinking unpasteurised milk. Half the things Beachcomber hates are in fact a result of over-population, and he has little sympathy with birth-control. But I do not believe that even his hatred of science is such as would make him welcome a return to mediaeval sanitation, and the spread of the Black Death, or even an increase in tuberculosis. There is matter enough in the modern world for savage indignation. But when a man, however brilliant his talent, screams indiffer-

ently at everything around him, healthy or unhealthy, hideous or beautiful, he ceases to be a satirist and becomes a hypochondriac. This book is, in fact, well named : most of it is good stuff, part of it is, in the worst sense of the word, nonsense.

## DR. ROUTH

MARTIN Joseph Routh was born in 1755, was elected President of Magdalen at the age of thirty-six, and died in his hundredth year, still President of Magdalen. His most important work was the *Reliquiae Sacrae*, five volumes of texts collected from the more obscure pre-Nicene Fathers.

It is believed that only one article in the entire collection first saw the light in the President's pages : viz., a fragment of Africanus, about fifty lines long, which he edited from two MSS. at Vienna, and one at Paris. But he also recovered the Greek of a certain fragment of Petrus Alexandrinus from a MS. in the Bodleian—the passage having been hitherto only known in the Latin version of Leontius Byzantinus.

This quotation, which I take from Dean Burgon's *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, may amuse the irreverent, but the *Reliquiae* earned Dr. Routh a European reputation. Moreover, as one who linked the theology of the Nonjurors and the Caroline Divines with that of the Oxford Movement, he is still venerated among High Churchmen, and it is principally for their benefit, no doubt, that a full and scholarly Life has been prepared.\* The Episcopalian Churches of Scotland and the United States owe a particular debt of piety to his memory, for the sympathetic interest he took in their affairs. But Mr. Middleton's book can be warmly recommended also to those who, though they do not share his Anglican beliefs, find themselves fascinated by the ecclesiastic and academic dignitaries of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

These prelates and Heads of Houses have come, I think, to possess a certain aesthetic quality from their idiosyncratic characters and habits of thought. Their learning was prodigious, but to a modern eye their ignorance is hardly less extra-

\* *Dr. Routh.* By R. D. Middleton.

ordinary. The classical Greek and Latin authors, the theologians from Eusebius and Clement to Jansenius and Hoadly, the Old Testament in the Hebrew original, some histories in the English and French vernaculars, and occasionally Dante, Ariosto, even Camoens—such was the continent explored to its smallest by-way by their indefatigable erudition. Stunned by the weight of their learning, the modern reader can bolster himself up by considering the illimitable territories of which they were blissfully unaware. To-day an educated man is expected to have at least a smattering of knowledge in dozens of alarmingly diverse subjects of which the old giants were innocent. In his own time a Parr or a Porson might have said: "What I know not is not knowledge." At the Universities there may still survive a few very old men with the profundity and narrowness of the old learning, though the breed must be almost extinct. But whether one welcomes or deplors this change in the furniture of our minds, it is more important than the change in the rapidity of communication; and it has given an air of curious and picturesque remoteness to a man like Dr. Routh, who may conceivably have been seen by someone still alive.

The anecdotes in Mr. Middleton's book are numerous and delightful. Dr. Routh always wore gown, cassock, bands, and wig. (One of his wigs is still preserved, for after his death it was "fossilized in the petrifying stream at Knaresborough" by Dr. Daubeney, who occupied the joint Chair of Chemistry, Botany and Rural Economy.) Dr. Parr spoke of Routh as "venerable" at the age of forty, and it was remarked that "he had always been old and gave the impression of never having known any other stage of being." Probably the innocent affectation of premature senility has always been popular in the Universities, where seniority enjoys the most agreeable privileges. Routh, moreover, emphasised his diminutive stature by a deeply bent carriage. He was very hard of hearing, and condescended to make skilful use of this infirmity. He had a canary which deafened his visitors, and a dog, Romulus, which had had a cat for foster-mother, with the result that it never got its feet wet and washed its face with its paws. His conversational style was august:

To his servant he would at times exclaim "Bring it back, sirrah." Of the Bishop he would say: "Here comes my Lord of Oxford." Not long before his death his gardener at Tylehurst became insane and had to be sent away. The gardener begged leave to see his master once more and to ask his blessing. The President gladly received him. The man stooped as if to kiss his

hand, and in so doing bit a piece out of it. "How did you feel, Mr. President," said Sir George Dasent afterwards, "when the man bit your hand?" "Why, at first, Sir," said Dr. Routh, "I felt considerably alarmed, for I was unaware, Sir, what proportion of human virus might have been communicated by the bite; but in the interval of reaching the house, I was convinced that the proportion of virus must have been very small indeed; then I was at rest, but, Sir, I had the bite cauterized."

He was comprehensibly opposed to reforms, especially to such as placed Papists and Dissenters on a level with Churchmen. He refused to acknowledge the existence of the railway, he deplored the "Kirk-going" Queen, and on the Sunday after the Duke of Wellington's death he proposed a toast "To the memory of our great and good Chancellor who never erred except when he was overruled." There is a characteristic story of his benign treatment of an aristocratic sprig who wished to come to Magdalen:

Dr. Routh publicly inquired in what book I wished to be examined. I selected the *Odyssey*, as I had just been reading it. He gave me the choice as to the passage on which I should be examined. I chose the First Book as being the easiest. After a few lines had been construed to the President's satisfaction, the examination concluded with the remark of the examiner: "Sir—very well, Sir—that is perfectly sufficient for a Gentleman Commoner at Magdalen."

Almost his last appearance in public, Pusey recollected, was when he was "wheeled out on a fine winter's morning into the high Street to sit beneath the great Tower of the College and watch the young bloods of Christ Church riding out to meet the hounds."

Dr. Routh married, on his sixty-sixth birthday, a lady aged thirty, who rapidly became infected by her husband's antiquity:

She was, with her strongly marked features, her abundance of grey hair, and her luxuriant moustache, a striking figure, drawn through the streets of Oxford in a little donkey-chaise attended by a hunch-backed lad named Cox. . . . "Woman," her husband used to proclaim, when from the luncheon-table he saw Cox leading the donkey-carriage round, "Woman, the ass is at the door."

More romantic, it seems, was his attachment to a choir-boy called Lister, remarkable alike for his intellect and his good looks: when he died, aged sixteen, the President wrote a touching Latin epitaph and edited a translation that the lad had made from Bion. There are in this book a number of delightful stories which I should like to quote, such as the Blot

in the Bodleian and the Reconverted Russian Princess. Mozley in his *Reminiscences* makes some disobliging statements about Routh which Mr. Middleton shows to be untrustworthy. His own book is a little too hagiographical for my taste, and I am far from convinced that the President was as saintly as he is painted here. Thus there is no mention of Tuckwell's story that the President's death was caused by chagrin at the fall, during the Crimean War, of the Russian securities in which his fortune was invested. He died intestate, as if he thought that Death had forgotten him, and a nephew inherited the money that had been destined to charitable and academic purposes. Pious, good-natured, devoted to his College, a passionate collector of books and the object of general veneration, Dr. Routh seems to have enjoyed an uncommonly happy life. He showed signal kindness to Newman, who wrote on the eve of his reception: "You are the only person of station in Oxford who has shown me any countenance in a long course of years." Mr. Middleton's book contains the best of Burgon, and a lot more. Now that we have scholarly lives of Routh and Porson, may we not look for an equally enjoyable book on the exuberant, fustigating, truculent, polysyllabic, generous, eccentric and incomparably learned Dr. Parr?

### A. E. HOUSMAN\*

MR. Laurence Housman explains in his preface to *More Poems*, by A. E. Housman that he was permitted, but not enjoined, by his brother's will to publish "any poems which appear to him to be completed and to be not inferior to the average of my published poems." He has used this permission liberally, and printed forty-nine new poems. I think he was right to do so, for they will certainly give great pleasure to many. Moreover, we are glad of any scraps that fall from the desk of an important poet: his failures can on occasion illuminate and help us to appreciate his successes. And the opinion that Housman was an important poet is widely held.

\* *More Poems*. By A. E. Housman.

The introductory poem seems to me a very fair example of the middling Housman :

They say my verse is sad : no wonder ;  
 Its narrow measure spans  
 Tears of eternity, and sorrow,  
 Not mine, but man's.

This is for all ill-treated fellows  
 Unborn and unbegot,  
 For them to read when they're in trouble  
 And I am not.

Here is the pessimism, so attractive to most fastidious persons, expressed in what seems an admirably epigrammatic style. But closer examination suggests, I think, that the trope in the second and third lines is not very lucid. Further, the expression "Unborn and unbegot," borrowed by Housman from *Richard II*, is appropriate in a dramatic vituperation, but in an epigram it becomes clumsy : "unbegot" adds nothing to "unborn"—it is there only to make a rhyme.

I pass over a number of poems that are written in a very monotonous metre. (Too often Housman's verses call irresistibly for the Hymns Ancient and Modern tunes used for *Jerusalem the Golden* and *The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden*). Then we come to this :

Crossing alone the nighted ferry  
 With the one coin for fee,  
 Whom, on the wharf of Lethe waiting,  
 Count you to find ? Not me.

The brisk fond lackey to fetch and carry,  
 The true, sick-hearted slave,  
 Expect him not in the just city  
 And free land of the grave.

These lines seem to me admirable and flawless, worthy, in fact, of Landor. How closely the versification follows the sentiment ; the fifth line so quick and busy, the end so slow and spacious and serene ! It is by a poet's best work that he must be judged, and the skill to write as well as this is rare.

A little later we come to a poem too long to quote, of which these stanzas are typical :

When he's returned I'll tell him—oh,  
 Dear fellow, I forgot :  
 Time was you would have cared to know,  
 But now it matters not.



Strange, strange to think his blood is cold  
 And mine flows easy on ;  
 And that straight look, that heart of gold,  
 That grace, that manhood gone.

One is unhappily reminded of the famous review of *In Memoriam* : " These touching lines evidently come from the full heart of the widow of a military man." And the weakness, the sentimentality of this poem, which is admittedly personal, brings us into rather ticklish territory. A ribald friend of mine once said : " Professor Housman seems to have taken up first with a young man who committed suicide, and then with one who was hanged. No wonder his view of life is gloomy." But the poet himself was at pains to explain that very little of *The Shropshire Lad* was biographical. At the same time, there can be no doubt, I think, that young men, especially young men in uniform, excited in the poet envy and a quite special solicitude. " A soldier cheap to the King and dear to me," we read in one of the new poems, and the belted redcoat in " his finery of fire " appears repeatedly in both the previous volumes.

I sought them far and found them,  
 The sure, the straight, the brave,  
 The hearts I lost my own to,  
 The souls I could not save.  
 They braced their belts about them,  
 They crossed in ships the sea,  
 They sought and found six feet of ground  
 And there they died for me.

Housman's style is often very close to Kipling's, but when they write about soldiers it is with rather different emotions. One of the *Last Poems* reiterates the lines :

Says I, I will 'list for a lancer,  
 Oh who would not sleep with the brave ?

It is very dangerous to attribute to a poet all the sentiments he expresses in his work, but it seems evident that a passionate longing for the muscular and reckless company of soldiers, an envy of their rough and hazardous life, devoured Housman as a repeated daydream.

Say, lad, have you things to do ?  
 Quick then, while your day's at prime.  
 Quick, and if 'tis work for two,  
 Here am I, man : now's your time.

\* \* \*

Ere the wholesome flesh decay,  
 And the willing nerve be numb,  
 And the lips lack breath to say,  
 " No, my lad, I cannot come."

But it remained only a dream.

More than I, if truth were told,  
Have stood and sweated hot and cold,  
And through their veins in ice and fire  
Fear contended with desire.

Fear was victorious, and Housman became the first Latinist in Europe; a professor; and an undoubted authority upon wine. "Keep we must, if keep we can, these foreign laws of God and man." It was his clear duty to resist these vagabond and antinomian longings, to stay at home, to use his prodigious talent for exact scholarship. And whenever this ark of refuge seemed too chilly, he could sublimate his disquietude in the dream-world of his verse. There was something at once heroic and ridiculous in the patience with which he edited Manilius, an astrological versifier, whose poetic talent was obviously inferior to his own. Scaliger and Bentley, it is true, had undertaken the same task, and no doubt Housman liked to measure himself against these titans. But the futility of the work, judged by vulgar standards, may, I conceive, have added to its value for him, and he was able to vent upon other scholars the spite he felt against himself for not following his profoundest impulses. (Such was his delight in saying venomous and contemptuous things, his brother tells us, that he had in his note-book pages stocked with phrases waiting for the appearance of appropriate victims.)

I have tried to elucidate this contrast between Housman's daydreams and his way of life because I believe it may explain the principal weakness in his poetry—a sentimentality due to a sort of insincerity. Scholarship was, by his choice, his real life: verse-writing a release, a fantasy. To describe as wish-fulfilment poetry so pessimistic may seem a paradox. But it is a common vice to luxuriate in gloom, and the Terence who speaks in many of the poems is, for all his gloom, a pretty dashing fellow who has not hesitated to follow his fancies. So I think it is not unreasonable to see in him a projection of what Housman regretfully suppressed in his own life. And those of his more devoted admirers, who may resent any suggestion of insincerity, are invited to peruse the hymn, printed in *More Poems*, which he so surprisingly wrote to be sung at his funeral:

O thou that from thy mansion  
Through time and place to roam  
Dost send abroad thy children,  
And then dost call them home, etc.

True, "thou" and "thy" are not honoured with capital letters, but these lines are an odd description of "whatever brute

or blackguard made the world." Terence, it would seem, had been buried earlier, and presumably without the help of a hymn.

Some of Housman's best poems (such as "The laws of God, the laws of man," and "Others, I am not the first, Have willed more mischief than they durst") are expressions of the conflict that I have tried to define: others are more objective, like *The Merry Guide*, "West and away the wheels of darkness roll," and "We'll to the woods no more"—all of them admirable. In this sort too the new book contains a poem on Leander, an admirable translation of Horace's *Diffugere nives* and a witty epigram on Noah, who fled the sinful cities of the plain only to fall, on a mountain, into incest. These are burnished and charming pieces, which form a valuable addition to our *Lyra Elegantiarum*. But the high and, I venture to think, exorbitant, claims made for Housman as a poet are not usually based upon such as these. Beneath an attempted stoicism, most of his poems are packed with self-pity, and with these it is all too easy to associate one's own emotions. The language is commonly very similar to Kipling's—which influenced the other I cannot determine—but it is more scrupulously polished, and the pessimism of the poems makes them palatable to fastidious persons who are affronted by Kipling's heartiness. To some in each generation of adolescents, who are distracted by conflicts similar to his, Housman's poems, including the new volume, are likely to continue making a particular appeal. And where poetry is concerned, most men remain faithful to their adolescent taste. Those, on the other hand, who, growing older, reopen the volumes that once they bought from Mr. Blackwell or Mr. Heffer, and find much of the magic gone, are entitled to seek an explanation of this evanescence, to try to detect where and why these poems fail. And at the same time they can recognise that it is a great and honourable privilege for a poet to be much loved by very young men.

## A HOSTESS

IN May 1775 a house in the Rue St Honoré was the scene of a singular ceremony, a mock marriage, complete with bouquets, banquet and epithalamium, between Mme Geoffrin and the Marquise de la Ferté-Imbault. They had been living together

for thirty-seven years, and the marriage was intended to celebrate a treaty of perpetual peace. A few weeks previously the younger lady, Mme de la Ferté-Imbault, had reached the age of sixty, and submitted to her companion a series of good resolutions. No longer would she show ill humour to Mme Geoffrin or Mme Geoffrin's friends. The difference in their tastes, she continued, had never destroyed their mutual esteem. They had different sets of friends, but between them they had the largest and most select "*magasin de bonne compagnie*" in Paris. They should therefore regard their respective societies as a parterre in which each could pick freely the most various flowers according to her tastes. Had they not reached the age when they were more like sisters than mother and daughter?

Though Mme Geoffrin was indeed the mother of Mme de la Ferté-Imbault, she was only fifteen years her senior. She had the most brilliant salon in Paris—that is to say in the world. She was known all over Europe as the intimate friend of such writers and wits as Fontenelle, d'Alembert, Diderot, Marmontel, Turgot, the Abbés Galiani and Morellet, of such painters as Boucher, Vernet and Van Loo. Every distinguished foreign visitor coveted her invitations—Horace Walpole, Hume, Lady Hervey, Prince von Kaunitz, Gustavus III, Stanislas Poniatowski. She corresponded with Catherine the Great, and had been received in Vienna with the highest honours by the Empress Maria Theresa.

Yet Mme Geoffrin was of very humble origin: her father was a valet who made some money and married into the small bourgeoisie. Born in 1699, Marie-Thérèse Rodet when just fourteen became the wife of François Geoffrin, a man of forty-eight. He was a manufacturer of looking-glasses, very rich as a result of a marriage to an old maid; and he believed his second choice to be equally prudent. For Marie-Thérèse had attracted his attention by the fervour with which she performed her religious exercises. The fact that she was a pretty little girl—a portrait by Nattier shows at any rate that she became a most beautiful young woman—doubtless seemed to the widower an additional advantage. Very soon he discovered his mistake. Mme Geoffrin was never unfaithful—she seems to have been exempt from the temptations of the flesh—but she filled his house with talkative friends who not only ate his food, drank his wine, and disturbed his privacy, but showed a displeasing indifference to religion. Mme de Tencin, an old lady who lived a few doors away, had taken a fancy to her little *bourgeoise* neighbour, and so had Mme de Tencin's clever friends. After being

successively a nun and the most dissolute of the Regent's mistresses, she was now consoling her old age with a salon attended by such men as Fontenelle and Montesquieu. (D'Alembert, it may be added, was not to be seen in her drawing-room, but then he was her illegitimate son.) Monsieur Geoffrin stormed in vain : when Mme de Tencin died, his wife inherited her salon, and he sat silent while such recreants as Voltaire scintillated outrageously. In 1749 one of Mme Geoffrin's guests asked what had happened to the old gentleman who always sat at the end of the table and never said a word. (The *bout de la table* in France is the place not of the host but of the least distinguished guest). "C'était mon mari," Mme Geoffrin answered, "il est mort."

The Encyclopaedists are often regarded as champions of political liberty. In fact they were almost all believers in enlightened autocracy. They denounced the methods of the French administration not because these were tyrannical but because they were antiquated. They placed what they called Reason above all past traditions, the Classical no less than the Catholic, and they aimed at replacing Christianity by a vague humanitarian religion with no "superstitions" attached to it. Though the French Revolution did result largely from the alteration they effected in the intellectual climate, they would have regarded it with disgust and alarm. The prestige of the Encyclopaedists throughout Europe in the middle of the Eighteenth century was enormous, and it was as their hostess that Mme Geoffrin attained her unique position.

Her husband's money was certainly a considerable help. She had a fine house, filled with pictures bought from her painter friends, and she provided delicious food and wine. But those who attributed her success to her cook were actuated merely by envy—one of her guests indeed complained that the food was "succinct." Mme Geoffrin was immensely and unostentatiously generous to her friends. But if she spared no expense, still less did she spare trouble. During her first years as a hostess she was profoundly influenced by the aged Fontenelle, a man all head and no heart, a philosopher to whom indifference was the supreme wisdom. He was never in a hurry, never angry, never sad, and, when asked if he had never laughed, "No," he said, "I never go Ha ! ha !" As a consequence of this emotional economy he lived to be a hundred. When Mme Geoffrin declared with characteristic honesty that her benefactions were a form of self-indulgence, she showed herself to be Fontenelle's pupil. Dispassionate, she concentrated her powerful will on one object, to surround herself with persons she found agreeable ; the

persons she found agreeable were the most intelligent men of her time; and she would do anything to make them happy. She had the sense to know that kindness pays, and treated her servants particularly well—in order, she said, to be sure they would behave well to her. (They did.) One may be sure, however, that she was kind by nature, for kindness is a virtue that policy can cultivate but not engender.

When Mme Geoffrin's friends placed obstacles in the way of her ambitions for them, they were severely scolded. She was a born governess, but a governess with charm. She "administered" her salon—to use Sainte-Beuve's phrase—with a rigour that only her tact rendered tolerable. In her house, closely as it was identified with the *Encyclopédie*, sceptical and libertine opinions could not be expressed except with decorous insinuation. Diderot, for instance, could please at the court of Catherine the Great, but was not sufficiently urbane for the Rue St Honoré. Though Mme Geoffrin furnished his entire house for him, she would not support his manners. One cannot exaggerate the importance attached to that *bon ton* which was so largely responsible for the *douceur de vivre* before the French Revolution. Good society was distinguished from vulgar or provincial society, in the Goncourts' words,

par la perfection des moyens de plaire, par la délicatesse de l'amabilité, par l'obligeance des procédés, par l'art des égards, des complaisances, du savoir-vivre, par toutes les recherches et les raffinements de cet esprit de société qu'un livre du temps compare et assimile à l'esprit de charité.

Alas, we English have no such vocabulary, presumably because these refinements have never here been so sedulously cultivated: while the French under an autocratic government expended their energies upon perfecting the art of living, we were engaged upon developing our liberties and conquering half the world. The key word is "plaire": in Eighteenth century France the mathematician no less than the courtesan was called upon to employ the art of pleasing, but "plaire" is usually best translated as "to make oneself liked," a procedure which in a society given up to the cult of personal relations was the first condition of success. And, in order to make oneself liked, every sign of self-assertion must be removed, and the most sensitive antennae developed to respond immediately to the feelings of others. Tact becomes the cardinal virtue, and tact is indeed the mundane, and occasionally delusive, expression of moral elegance. (In the Lives of Ste Thérèse de Lisieux many instances quoted of her saintly behaviour are examples of the tact that came by nature to the irreligious

and unchaste Julie de Lespinasse.) Mme Geoffrin's position depended upon this virtue far more than upon her wealth or her kindness. It was, Hume bears witness, a pleasure to be scolded by her. She had enjoyed no solid education—her letters are illiterate ; she could be witty, but unlike Mme du Deffand she was not a notable wit ; she was not unaffectionate, but she lacked the exquisite responsiveness of Mlle de Lespinasse ; she had beautiful manners, despite her origin, but she lacked the magnificent style of the Maréchale de Luxembourg. It was tact, combined with and controlled by a will of steel, a tact never disturbed by a violent emotion, that made her drawing-room the coveted resort of philosophers and kings.

On one occasion only did she derogate from her chosen standards. She had been the most valuable of mentors, the most generous of friends, to Stanislas Poniatovski when he was a young man in Paris, and he always addressed her as "maman." When he was elected King of Poland, her delight was literally immense—it knew no bounds. To be the "maman" of a king was indeed a rarer distinction than to be his mistress, especially, as her enemies were not slow to comment, for the daughter of a domestic. But the sincerity of her affection for Stanislas excuses her ebullitions ; she was always ambitious for the humblest of her friends, and here was a triumph beyond all expectations. Though she was sixty-six, and had hardly ever slept out of Paris, she undertook, at the urgent invitation of the King, the arduous journey to Warsaw. The visit did not end as auspiciously as it began : kings prefer asking advice to receiving it, and with all her tact Mme Geoffrin, who had never been at Court, did not understand that royalties must be regarded as incompletely domesticated. In the eighteenth century it was the fashion for monarchs to seek the friendship of intellectuals, but usually the philosophers forgot to be philosophical, and the royalties could not for long forget to be royal. Mme Geoffrin was happy to find herself back in the Rue St. Honoré, where her word was law.

Never in any civilisation have women been so powerful as in eighteenth century France. Not only was the King governed by a series of mistresses, but nearly all the most important men of the time were subject to women through love or friendship. These women moreover possessed outstanding gifts that made them worthy of their power. Voltaire's adored Mme de Châtelet was a distinguished mathematician, Mme de Pompadour herself was a thorough intellectual ; and wit seems then to have been an accomplishment native to the entire sex. The writings of the erudite no less than the delicate curves of *Louis Quinze* furniture

were calculated to flatter a feminine taste ; painters, musicians and novelists concentrated upon celebrating feminine charm. And the throne from which woman, arbiter no less of philosophies than of elegances, governed the civilised world, was an armchair in a drawing-room.

If Mme Geoffrin could find herself transported by some miracle into a salon in modern Paris, what would be her astonishment, and even horror, at the volubility of her successors ! The hostess should prefer listening to talking, and intervene only to stimulate, guide or silence her guests. She requires also to be ruthless and without snobbery : once she gives way to a kind heart or a love of coronets, and consents to receive bores, however worthy or well-born, her salon is doomed ; for the bores, being unwanted elsewhere, will become her most regular visitors, and drive all others away. Wives are a particular danger, since clever men often marry tiresome women. Mme Geoffrin entertained no women—except Mlle de Lespinasse—at her famous dinners, though she was intimate with such charming women as the Comtesse d’Egmont, Mme Necker and the Comtesse de Boufflers, giving supper parties for their benefit. Finally, the hostess must not be burdened with a family. Administering a salon is a whole-time job, that leaves little energy for the duties of a wife, a mistress or a mother. Mme Geoffrin disregarded her husband, and lacked a lover, but she was cursed with a daughter. She married her off to a member of the great house of Estampes, but the husband died five years later, and the Marquise de la Ferté-Imbault returned to the Rue St. Honoré. (Pretty young widows endangered their reputations if they lived alone.) A vivacious chatter-box, who charmed by talking nonsense, she founded a mock Order called the Lanturelus, the members of which met to exchange *vers d’occasion*. But she fancied herself also as a moralist : she made a vast collection of the sayings of the sages, and wrote a summary of Malebranche. While her mother reigned over the Encyclopaedists, she was a fervent champion of orthodoxy. Maurepas and Cardinal de Bernis were among her closest friends. Her marriage had given her the *entrée* to the French court, from which her mother was as a bourgeoisie excluded. She became especially attached to the royal house of Condé ; she received a proposal of marriage from Stanislas Leczinski, Duke of Lorraine, father-in-law of Louis XV, a predecessor of her mother’s friend on the throne of Poland ; she was given a hand in the education of the Dauphin’s children. She was better educated than her mother, and better connected. Thus difference of opinion,



difference of society, and difference of temperament sharpened the rivalry inevitable between two strong-willed women living under the same roof. Mme Geoffrin did not appreciate her daughter's love of nonsense, Mme de la Ferté-Imbault profoundly disapproved of her mother's free-thinking friends.

The reconciliation and the mock-marriage of 1775 did not result merely from the good sense of advancing years. More than ten years previously the celebrated quarrel had taken place between Mme du Deffand and Julie de Lespinasse. The most delightful of all the Frenchwomen of her delightful time (until love made of her a martyr and something of a bore) Mlle de Lespinasse was the illegitimate daughter of Mme du Deffand's brother, who had married Julie's half-sister. She lived with her aunt, whose salon was no less celebrated than Mme Geoffrin's, as an unpaid companion. One evening the old lady discovered that her *protégée* was holding a salon of her own, and expelled her, with great brutality, from the house. D'Alembert, the chief glory of the du Deffand salon, was in love with Julie, and naturally followed her. This was a heaven-sent opportunity for Mme Geoffrin. She detested Mme du Deffand, who was not only her most powerful rival but an aristocrat who had treated her with insolent mockery. At once she dashed to the rescue; she sold her treasured paintings by Van Loo to provide an income for Mlle de Lespinasse—she had already given an annuity to d'Alembert—indeed nothing was too good for the truant pair. Nor was she excited merely by the pleasure of scoring off an old enemy. D'Alembert was the most amusing of men as well as a mathematician of genius and a leading light of the unorthodox; Julie de Lespinasse was irresistible: Mme Geoffrin gave her the entry even to her dinners, to which no other woman had ever been invited. Mme Geoffrin was sincerely devoted to them both for their own sakes.

The years passed; Mlle de Lespinasse set up a salon of her own, entertaining much the same group as Mme Geoffrin; but there was none of the jealousy that might have been expected. Indeed the intimacy continued to increase. Julie and d'Alembert were coming to the Rue St. Honoré every day, then twice every day. Mme de la Ferté-Imbault was disgusted: she was also alarmed. This irreligious and immoral pair behaved as if they were Mme Geoffrin's children. She might, who knows, leave them a large part of her fortune. In fact they were utterly disinterested, and, both of them illegitimate children, found in Mme Geoffrin the protective warmth of an affection of which their origins had deprived them. She in turn found in Mlle de

Lepinasse the sympathy of opinion and temperament that she missed in her real daughter. Mme de la Ferté-Imbault's jealousy and distrust are comprehensible, and in the contest that followed most modern authorities have taken her side. It is well, however, to remember that already as a young woman she had been the cause of Montesquieu's quarrel with her mother. Mme Geoffrin had written to him an enthusiastic letter about *L'Esprit des Lois*, and he was a little surprised at her having digested so rapidly so serious a work. Mme de la Ferté-Imbault hastened to explain to him that she had read some extracts from the book to her mother, whose letter had been based merely on these. Whereupon Montesquieu, very unphilosophically, took offence. The young woman's behaviour has been called ingenuous, but was it not conceited and even malicious? She had had to sit silent while her mother entertained her intellectual friends, and she took the chance to show one of the most distinguished of them that she and not her mother was the clever one.

Though Mme de la Ferté-Imbault made no attempt to disguise her dislike of Mlle de Lepinasse and d'Alembert, her rudeness did not discourage their constant attendance in the Rue St. Honoré, and served merely to exasperate her mother. So she changed her tactics, promised no longer to be rude, and effected a reconciliation with Mme Geoffrin. The following year gave her the opportunity for which she was waiting. Mme Geoffrin had a stroke. "Ma mère n'a pas toute sa tête," Mme de la Ferté-Imbault wrote at the time, "mais elle ne souffre pas; et quand on lui demande comment elle va, elle dit toujours *bien*." The parish priest suggested that she should receive the Sacraments, and she agreed. Her daughter would not allow d'Alembert, who hitherto had been in and out of the house all day, to enter her mother's room. He was indignant: the old lady, he said, ought not to be frightened; she needed distraction, and should be given not *The Imitation of Christ* but some amusing book like *The Arabian Nights*. The virtuous daughter picked up her pen, and informed him that he might see her mother but must not make shocking remarks: "My mother has always loved God better than such people as you." This was not true. Mme Geoffrin, despite her protection of the "Philosophes," had indeed always followed the external observances of a Catholic. When Marmontel said she went to church, as other women to an illicit rendezvous, in secret, the witticism had no foundation in fact. One may doubt whether she had faith, but she always and openly believed in the conventions: she bullied several of her friends into receiving the Last Sacraments, as a matter of

*bienséance*, and certainly would have been horrified at dying without them herself. But no less certainly she was devoted to her friends, not only to d'Alembert and Julie, but to Morellet, Suard and Marmontel. If she did not see them during the last year of her life, it was because she was no longer herself. A year before she died, "Mme Geoffrin is neither dead nor alive," Mme du Deffand wrote; "she remains paralysed on one side and unconscious." Mme de la Ferté-Imbault took advantage of this to cut her mother off from all her old friends. Naturally these did not keep their indignation to themselves, and the old lady's bedroom became a battlefield between the rival clans of the devout and the sceptical. When she became a little better, she approved of her daughter's behaviour to d'Alembert—or so, at least, her daughter declared—and refused to see him. In Sainte-Beuve's view she saw that if she was to have any peace she must choose between her daughter and her friends, and the tie of blood proved the stronger. It is unlikely that the whole truth of the matter will ever be known. If the society of her old friends was going to prevent Mme Geoffrin from dying as a Catholic, her daughter was justified in excluding them. But it is most unlikely that they would have entertained such a purpose, and almost certain, in view of her previous conduct, that they could not have achieved it. Her daughter's behaviour therefore appears most heartless, and Mme de la Ferté-Imbault herself gives us a fact the sinister significance of which seems to have escaped the biographers :

Having been much surrounded by friends all her life, my mother liked to have her room always full of people. So, in her last days, as her sight had grown very weak, I had the idea of satisfying this caprice by collecting the servants at the end of her room and making them play piquet as if they were friends of hers.

How happy would her old friends have been to come to her room to talk, even though she who had so long directed the conversation was no longer able to follow it ! How cruel—if not to her mother, at least to these friends—of Mme de la Ferté-Imbault to deprive them of this consolation ! How macabre a trick to play upon a half-conscious woman ! Mme de la Ferté-Imbault possessed the complacent unscrupulousness that characterises persons who are religious but not good.

Mme Geoffrin died on October 6, 1777. Two days before her death there was talk in her room about the means by which a government can make men happy : "Yes," she whispered, "but do not forget the importance of giving them pleasures—

which is too little taken into consideration." These were her last recorded words. Her death did not end the quarrels excited by her illness. Three months later accounts of her were published by Morellet, Thomas, and d'Alembert praising her character and recounting her noble actions. These *Eloges* were not of a nature to please her daughter, and in the controversy that followed Mme de la Ferté-Imbault published the letter she had written to d'Alembert. Condorcet declared that this was a fake: the original letter, he declared, had been far less justifiable. The controversy was never settled; and though Mme de la Ferté-Imbault lived on for fourteen years, she fails after her mother's death to retain our interest. When she saw her royal friends overtaken by the Revolution, doubtless she blamed the disaster upon her old enemies, her mother's friends, the "Philosophes." But to posterity it appears that these were responsible for much that has proved permanently beneficial in the Revolution, and that its excesses were chiefly due to the follies of the aristocracy, the hierarchy, and the Court.

## SUICIDE

THE researches of Continental sociologists, especially Bayet, Durkheim and Halbwachs, have provided a mass of fascinating material for the study of suicide. Mr. Fedden is the first English writer to take advantage of their researches; and he not only presents their conclusions in a succinct and attractive form, but adds a quantity of information collected from his wide reading.\* His style is polished, his comments invariably sensible; and his book can be very strongly recommended to the general reader as well as to the student of comparative morals.

When I was busy myself with a study of suicide, acquaintances to whom I spoke of it would look at me with vague alarm. "Isn't that very morbid?" they would enquire, apparently expecting me at any moment to divert the knife I was using from the roast beef to my own throat. Suicide, like the more eccentric manifestations of sex, I discovered to be an improper subject; and I

\* *Suicide*. By Henry Romilly Fedden.

was tempted to conclude from this repression that the profound impulse to self-destruction was far commoner than was usually supposed. Mr. Fedden writes :

It is certain that its horror, its miserable and unpleasant side, have been distorted and given unnatural prominence. A popular and primitive taboo revulsion, aided to-day by a popular and sensational press, has helped to bring this about. Suicide has become unsavoury in a way that would have been incomprehensible to the Romans.

The greater part of his book is devoted to the varying attitudes to suicide in the past, and the reasons offered in approval or condemnation of the practice. In certain societies suicide has been obligatory for particular classes of persons : the suttee of the Hindu widow is the best-known example, but among some backward peoples the aged and infirm are similarly expected to destroy themselves, and even to-day opinion strongly supports the captain who refuses to leave a sinking ship or the commander of a fortress who prefers death to surrender. Such "institutional" suicide is entirely different from the personal suicide. "This most individualistic of all actions disturbs society profoundly. Seeing a man who appears not to care for the things it prizes, society is compelled to question all it has thought desirable." Consequently, Governments have tended to condemn suicide, while the uneducated regard it with superstitious alarm. Philosophers have been less united in their disapproval. Plato allowed suicide in certain circumstances, but held that, man being God's chattel, self-destruction was a mutilation of divine property. Aristotle regarded it as an offence against the State. The Neo-Platonists deplored it as a sign of undesirable perturbation. But the Stoics, Epicureans and Cynics vehemently praised the "reasonable" suicide, and so set the high Roman fashion. Here is Epictetus :

Above all, remember that the door is open. Be not more timid than boys at play. As they, when they cease to take pleasure in their games, declare they will no longer play, so do you, when all things begin to pull against you, retire.

And here is Seneca :

If I know that I must suffer without hope of relief, I will depart, not through fear of pain itself, but because it prevents all for which I would live. . . .

As I choose the ship in which I sail, and the house I will inhabit, so I will choose the death by which I leave life. . . . In no matter more than in death should we act according to our own desire.

The spread of Christianity brought with it a reversion to a less

sophisticated attitude. The Scriptures, it is true contained no condemnation of suicide, and during the persecutions eagerness for martyrdom often amounted to wilful self-destruction. Tertullian was enthusiastic in his praise of the gratuitous martyr, and even suggested that the Saviour on the Cross had died voluntarily before natural causes had their way with Him. But with Augustine the condemnation of suicide imposed itself as orthodox. (Probably he was influenced by his hatred for the Donatists, who had a passion for killing themselves.) It was decided that Samson in the old Testament, and the Saints Sophronia and Domnina, who had killed themselves rather than submit to rape, had acted under a special divine revelation, and were in no circumstances to be imitated. Henceforth the rigour of the Church to the suicide was extreme, and translated itself into law. Not only was his corpse treated with every manner of indignity, but his property was confiscated.

The reasons given by St. Thomas Aquinas for the Church's condemnation of suicide would seem rather unconvincing to the mere rationalist. He restates the argument of Plato and Aristotle, and adds that man bears an instinctive charity towards himself, so that it is unnatural for him to do himself harm. But evidently a man who kills himself to avoid intolerable and incurable pain does not believe he is doing himself harm. And the scholastic conception of "Nature" is in any case difficult to accept.

The term *unnatural* itself represents no real or constant value. In practice it is impossible to define logically, unless one accepts Thomas Huxley's definition of the natural, which will include suicide. He says: "Nature means neither more nor less than that which is: the sum of phenomena presented to our experience; the totality of events, past, present, and to come." Usually, however, the term *unnatural* as used in argument does not even attempt to approach logicity. On inspection it often turns out to mean "unusual," or merely "something I don't like." It has been applied at various times to smoking, the steam-engine, vaccination and anæsthetics.

Since the Middle Ages no effective new arguments against suicide have been invented. There are cases, of course (but they are very rare) in which a man can justly be accused of running away from his duties to his family, but there is only one argument against suicide which admits of no answer, and this is that the Church in her infinite wisdom has condemned it as the most deadly of sins. The extent of ecclesiastical abhorrence for the offence may indeed surprise many. Casuists have decided that if you are shipwrecked there is no sin in allowing others to take their place

before you upon a raft ; but that once on the raft, it would be sinful for you to give your place on it to another, if this entailed certain death for yourself. It is licit, on the other hand, for a sick man to let himself die rather than undertake a cure that entails great expense, such as leaving his home for a foreign country. In judging such decisions it must be remembered that the suicide has usually less opportunity to repent than the murderer. But it is a little disconcerting to learn on high moral authority that to lay down your life for a friend is a sin, while to do so to save your purse is permissible.

The Protestant sects maintained the old opinion, the English law continued accordingly to punish self-murder, and as lately as 1823 a suicide was buried at the cross-roads in London (at the intersection of Grosvenor Place and King's Road). But the scholars of the Renaissance inaugurated a reaction to classical views. Erasmus and Blessed Thomas More were both indulgent to suicide. Donne wrote a pamphlet in its defence, and Hume made a powerful summary of the arguments in its favour. Shakespeare, Racine, even the respectable Addison, glorified suicide in their dramas, and educated public opinion followed suit. In 1791 suicide ceased to be a criminal offence in France, and forfeiture of the suicide's property in England was abolished in 1870. Here self-destruction remains a felony, however, and attempts at suicide are still occasionally punished with imprisonment.

Mr. Fedden points out that the present disapproval of suicide is partly due to theories of heredity : the shares of the family are forced down on the marriage market. But in his discussion of motives he justly insists on the desire for revenge that lies behind many suicides. "They'll be sorry then," the neurotic says ; and it has been held by psychologists that no one kills himself who has not wished for the death of another. Just as members of backward tribes, and the modern Japanese, kill themselves in vengeance, the modern neurotic seeks to punish the uncomprehending parent, wife, child, or friend.

One of the few statements in Mr. Fedden's book with which I disagree is that "the suicide of reason is always considered rarer than it is." Looking at the miserable estate of so many, the variety of disappointments and distresses which are the common lot of man, I am amazed not at the commonness of suicide, but at its rarity. Incurable disease, for instance, is a rare motive, probably because the "reasonable" suicide demands a strong will, and illness saps the will before it affects the instinct to continue living.

My only serious criticism of Mr. Fedden's book is that he has

been too cursory in examining the statistics of suicide. The differences in the suicide-rate between different countries are large, and inexplicable. Why, for instance, has Saxony been, for sixty years, the most suicidal country in Europe? Why should two Hungarian towns show the highest recorded rates? Why should San Francisco be so much more suicidal than New York? Why are Northamptonshire and Westmoreland the most suicidal English counties? The most interesting statistics are those revealing the influence upon suicide of war. During the last war the suicide-rate became 30 to 50 per cent lower, not only in belligerent but also in neutral states. The figures we possess apply of course only to the civil population—how many soldiers deliberately sought death it is impossible to guess. The decrease in suicide was much more marked among women and elderly men than among men of military age. Altogether the figures support the notion that war, in the past at any rate, brought more pleasure than pain to the majority of the population.

I cannot imagine any educated person finding Mr. Fedden's book uninteresting. It is written in an urbane style, it is packed with curious information, and it is the only authoritative English book on a most important subject.

## MATTHEW ARNOLD

THE printing and binding of text-books for schools are still as a rule so gratuitously squalid that they seem designed to instil in the young a dislike for learning. But I have been reading a recent volume in the Clarendon Series of English Literature which is a model of book-production as well as of editing, *Arnold, Poetry and Prose*, edited by E. K. Chambers, who in his introduction, writes excellently about Arnold's poetry. Here, for instance, are some facts that may be new to many as they were to me: In the later editions of the poems

there are some amusing alterations due to the increased knowledge of field botany which he acquired in his later years. The original blue convolvulus on the stubble field of *The Gipsy Scholar* becomes a pink one. The reaping scene of *Bacchanalia* is turned into a



mowing scene, because the dog-rose is over before harvest-time. The "green fern" of *Tristram and Iseult* gives place to "last year's fern," because that is what you really get in April. Another example of Arnold's desire for literal fidelity of visual rendering is also to be found in *The Scholar Gipsy*. Instead of "the slow punt swings round" he put "the punt's rope chops round." It is less elegant, but the punt at Bablock-Hythe is so fixed as to make a moving bridge which cannot swing round.

The most startling inaccuracy in his poems Arnold never altered. It comes into, or rather it pervades, *The Church of Brou*. I have read—I wish I knew where—the prose description by Edgar Quinet, on which Arnold based his eloquent account of the tomb. He can never have visited Brou, for he places it high in the mountain valleys of Savoy, within easy distance of Chambéry. In fact this peculiarly vulgar edifice is in a suburb of Bourg-en-Bresse, surrounded by a plain of which the only feature is a profusion of the famous white table-fowls. Sir Edmund Chamber's selection of the poetry is excellent. My only criticism is that I should like to see *Growing Old*, a most moving poem, instead of *Bacchanalia*, in which are to be found the worst lines Arnold ever wrote: "Look, ah, what genius. Art, science, wit! Soldiers like Caesar, Statesmen like Pitt! Sculptors like Phidias, Raphaels in shoals, Poets like Shakespeare, Beautiful souls!" But perhaps it is good for the young to see to what depths the great can sink. I should like incidentally to recommend Mr. Lionel Trilling's *Matthew Arnold* as a valuable and interesting book.

I am particularly fond of Arnold's poetry, but here I wish to offer a few suggestions about his prose. Like Newman's, this is flexible and urbane, but one feels that it has been too much filtered, so that many of the bacteria that give flavour are lost. I am so vulgar as to prefer the gusto of Macaulay, although in music I like a string quartet better than a brass band. Alike in style and in doctrine, Arnold has resisted the depredations of Time far better than his once more influential rivals, Ruskin and Carlyle. Even so, a mass of his writing now misses the mark. There is something intellectually disreputable, I consider, in his pleadings for an Established Church, made comprehensive on the basis of almost unlimited scepticism. But one must admit that the pragmatism on which he bases his plea is highly congenial to his tender-minded countrymen. His contempt for Natural Science again is lamentable. I happen to agree that Greek and Latin (I would add biology) are the best subjects for the education of any child with a taste for letters, but how frivolous are Arnold's gibes, in the *Speech at Eton*, about the diameter of

the sun and moon ! His literary criticism is often inspired, as in the essay on Wordsworth ; and beneath the Attic style one can perceive the profundity of feeling that informs his poetry. But he sometimes suffered from the quality he most deplored, provincial eccentricity. His depreciation of Dryden and Pope may be blamed upon his period, but to call Molière " by far the chief name in French poetry " shows personal perversity—especially as Arnold goes on to say that " the freshness and power of Molière are best felt when he uses prose." Another weakness in his criticism is succinctly stated by Professor Garrod :

He thinks too much of the uses of literature, and too little of its pleasures. He attaches too much importance to tastes and too little to relish. By the waters of Helicon he sits down and sips, sampling them with the meticulous satisfaction of the wine-taster. It is horrible to see him, sometimes, tasting without swallowing.

In *Culture and Anarchy* he declares—and the irony is not total—" I myself am properly a Philistine—Mr. Swinburne would add, the son of a Philistine." (This is a reference to Swinburne's epigram on this champion of culture against Philistia, " David the son of Goliath.") The quotations assembled in his note-books reveal puritanism as the backbone of his life, and Sir Edmund Chambers justly includes the odd and characteristic outburst against the French worship of " Aselgeia " or Lubricity, " a dangerous and perhaps fatal disease." He was eminently Victorian, not only in his literary criticism, but in his attacks upon Victorianism. When the forts of that folly fell, the bodies by the wall were Pater and Wilde and Samuel Butler rather than Matthew Arnold.

England has changed so remarkably since Arnold's death that a great part of his social criticism seems only of historical interest. Gone is the heartless optimism that took the degraded industrial towns as a sign of prosperity and progress ; gone, or almost gone, the Dissidence of Dissent. Arnold's tireless railing at the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill now seems silly, if not neurotic. But take his chief and repeated indictment of this country—" an upper class materialised, a middle class vulgarised, a lower class brutalised." How far among us have sweetness and light now been spread ? Many of the splendid country seats, " great fortified posts of the Barbarians," are turned to schools or lunatic asylums, but has impoverishment improved the aristocracy ? Is it more spiritual to write gossip columns than to shoot, is the peer's daughter more enlightened because she has given up hunting and announces in the public press, for pay, that there are no blackheads

on her nose? In the middle classes we can no longer see "that forest of firm, serious, unintelligent faces uplifted towards Dr. Spurgeon." Instead we have a forest of flabby, frivolous, unintelligent faces uplifted towards Miss Shirley Temple. This may show an increase in amiability and animal happiness, but hardly in culture. In the Populace the improvement is unquestionable; not so much because a far greater proportion have adapted bourgeois standards, as because from this class, no less than from the other classes, comes a stream of recruits to civilisation. Slums, however, remain, with the brutality that is their common consequence. On the whole there is far less in this country of the dismalness that depressed Arnold, but only a little more light. "The master-thought by which my politics are governed is rather this—the thought of the bad civilisation of the English middle-class." A Liberal, Arnold devoted most of his assaults to the defects of current Liberalism. If he were alive to-day, his chief butt would similarly, I am sure, be the lack of realism among the "progressive minded"—the anti-Fascists who howled simultaneously against Hitler and against Conscription, the high-souled sentimentalists who took Russia for a model of democratic enlightenment, the optimistic intellectuals who assume that freedom to criticise bureaucracy can continue, when the abolition of private capital has made every man dependent upon bureaucrats. Because his England was agonising beneath the uncontrolled competition of individual greeds, Arnold emphasised the claims of the community. To-day, I fancy, he might be exercised rather by the growing tyranny of the State. But what is now most urgent in his social criticism is that he attributed the materialism of the Barbarians, the vulgarity of the Philistines, and the brutality of the Populace, to one cause, Inequality. He contrasted this country with France where

Whether he mix with high or low, the gentleman feels himself in a world not alien or repulsive, but a world where people make the same sort of demands upon life, in things of this sort, as he does. In all these respects France is the country, where the people, as distinguished from a wealthy refined class, most live what we call a humane life, the life of a civilised man.

In this respect the French have maintained a signal superiority. To deny in the Seventies, as Arnold did, the natural rights of property, was a signal proof of that disinterestedness, that free play of mind, which was his criterion of culture. The paper on *Equality* from which I have quoted is one of his most thoughtful and persuasive works.

## THE GREVILLE MEMOIRS

THIS is the definitive Greville.\* At last we have the text entire (including not only the numerous passages suppressed by Reeve, but much that was crossed out by Greville himself,) edited in most scholarly fashion with succinct notes and an invaluable analytical index. But the more we applaud this edition, the more we are bound to deplore the circumstances of its publication. Not only does it cost fifteen guineas, but the edition is limited to 630 copies, many of which will no doubt repose undisturbed on the shelves of collectors. When so much labour and learning have been expended upon this edition, it is deplorable that the ordinary reader should still be obliged to use the old mutilated text. I am astonished that a house with such high traditions and so justly respected as Messrs. Macmillan should have condescended to this method of publication, against which Lytton Strachey himself would certainly have been the first to protest. Is there any purpose in limiting an edition except to make it rare, and is there any justification for making rare the only adequate edition of a classic?

To illustrate the superiority of this edition, I must give some account of a few of the previously suppressed passages. (Many of these appeared in Mr. P. W. Wilson's far from scholarly collection of extracts, and in Mr. Philip Morrell's agreeable potted version, *Leaves from the Greville Diaries*). There are good new stories of Dr. Johnson and of Selwyn; and I like an anecdote of the raffish pre-Victorian days: when George IV was first seen riding in the Park with Lady Conyngham, Lord Beauchamp—grandson of the reigning mistress, Lady Hertford—exclaimed "By G. our Grandmother must learn to ride or it is all over with us." Then Princess Victoria appears, a "vulgar-looking child." She succeeds, and Greville notes her aversion from, and fear of, Conroy, her distrust and dislike of her mother. (The cause, he reports the Duke of Wellington as saying, was her having witnessed familiarities between them. But there is some reason for believing this to be untrue.) Lady Cowper laments her obstinate character: "Her prejudices and antipathies were deep and strong and her disposition very inflexible." Apropos of the Bedchamber Plot: "The simple truth in this case is that the Queen could not endure the thought of parting with Melbourne, who is everything to her. Her feelings are *sexual*, though she does not know it." She went to a dance the day after her wedding, "shocking even her best friends, by not continuing for

\* *The Greville Memoirs, 1814-1860*. Edited by Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford.

a short space in that retirement which modesty and natural delicacy generally prescribe." The Duchess of Bedford's impression (1840) is that "the Queen is excessively in love with him, but He not a bit with her." Melbourne says he is "moving day and night at keeping her straight, but she is very resentful." She is "a spoilt child only intent upon the gratification of her social predilections." She "cannot or will not encourage conversation." She "never addresses her household except to give orders." There is a *tracasserie* about Prince George of Cambridge's flirtation with Lady Augusta Stewart, due to "the prudery of Albert" and the Queen's "love of gossip and exceeding arrogance and heartlessness." Her new yacht "is luxuriously fitted up, but everything is sacrificed to the comfort of the Queen and her husband, the whole Ship's company being crammed into wretched dog-holes, officers included." "Her sensibilities are not acute, and though she is not ill-natured, perhaps the reverse, she is hard-hearted, selfish and self-willed." She does not much like the little Prince of Wales, who she says is stupid, and "she was never really fond of the Pss. Royal because she thought her ugly." (Was this not rather jealousy of Prince Albert's love for his daughter?) She behaved abominably after the marriage to Prince Frederick, worrying and frightening her during pregnancy and thus endangering her life. Stockmar complained about this to Lord Clarendon in Berlin, who on his return was sent for to Windsor.

The Prince saw him first ; told him the Q. would not allude to the subject, but that he wished to go into it thoroughly with C., and to speak with perfect openness. He entered upon his occasion into many details concerning the education of his children, and expressed something like regret or doubt about what he called the "aggressive" system that the Q. had followed towards them. . . . He had always been embarrassed by the alarm he felt lest the Q.'s mind should be excited by any opposition to her will ; and that in regard to the children the disagreeable office of punishment had always devolved upon him.

Stockmar had already said that the Prince Consort "was completely cowed, and the Queen so excitable that the P. lived in perpetual terror of bringing on the hereditary malady." This fear for the Queen's sanity played a larger part among those close to her than has hitherto been realised. On occasions she used it as a threat. Palmerston is of course almost always in disgrace. "Their aversion to Palmerston," Greville notes in November, 1850, "is greater than ever, for to his former misdeeds is now added the part he takes about German affairs, on which Albert is insane."

Though few of the suppressed passages are very startling individually, their cumulative effect is considerable ; we see in the young Queen those vices which Disraeli later encouraged for his own ends, vices which made her neglect both constitutional propriety and personal dignity in her treatment of Mr. Gladstone.

The new edition throws some welcome light on Greville himself. He aimed at recording those stories of the day that were not in the newspapers, but only when they concerned public personages ; and from this principle he did not depart as often as one could wish. There are interesting notes upon his reading, and he refers often to his activities on the Turf, usually reproaching himself for waste of time and money, and expressing contempt for his fellow racing men. (In one suppressed passage he refers to Lord Derby as "avaricious and unscrupulous in his transactions on the Turf," and in another gives a long circumstantial account of Lord George Bentinck's dishonourable racing practices.) There is only one mention of Lady Graham, by whom he had a natural child. But two references in 1822 to Lady Georgiana Lennox reveal both calculated coolness and self-knowledge.

At the Priory I went into her room at night but was fool enough to go away without doing anything. I shall not be such a fool again.

I have been very often bored to death by the necessity of paying some attention to keep up an interest with G.L. . . . Having had so much trouble, I don't choose to drop it without bringing the thing to a conclusion.

In September, 1829, he notes :

I have been living at Fulham at Lord Wharncliffe's Villa for six or seven weeks, keeping a girl, of whom although she has good looks, good manners, and is not ill disposed, I am getting tired, and I doubt if I shall ever take one to live with me again. Henry de Roos, who is the grand purveyor of women to all his friends, gave her to me ; I have lived here in idleness and luxury, giving dinners, and wasting my time and my money rather more than usual. I have read next to nothing since I have been here ; I am ashamed to think how little—the Odes of Horace, some of Cicero's letters, two vols. of Lingard, *Ld. Mohun's Belisarius*, the *Lettres Provinciales*, 2 or 3 novels, scraps of reviews, of Hallam (3rd time) *atque alia paucissima*—in short, a most unprofitable life.

These too rare sidelights on Greville's private life are fascinating, and another new passage that illuminates his personal character is a long account (November, 1836-February, 1837) of his conduct when this same obliging Lord de Ros, who was

one of his most intimate friends, was caught cheating at cards. Greville seems to have behaved sensibly and honourably in a tricky situation, and we understand why so many important persons gave him their confidence and valued his judgment.

Reeve in the original edition suppressed much amusing gossip. Thus Palmerston, staying at Windsor, took a fancy to Lady Dacre, one of the Queen's Bedchamber Women, and marched into her room one night: "His tender temerity met with an invincible resistance. . . . The Queen has never forgotten and will never forgive it." Peel "looks more like a dapper shopkeeper than a Prime Minister. He eats voraciously, and cuts cream and jellies with his knife." Charles Villiers is so hot in his rage against Puseyism that he wishes to abolish Confession by Act of Parliament, and Frank Villiers forges bills for £40,000 which his father, Lord Jersey, has to redeem. The Queen (1848) has a horror of Disraeli, which Lord John Russell has been trying to overcome. Lady John Russell is the bane of her husband's political life (1855): "she has just cleverness enough to do a great amount of mischief; and her total want of judgment, joined with her unfortunate influence over him, has made him commit innumerable faults, which have reduced him to his present degraded and apparently hopeless position." When the Queen went to Paris "she was charmed with the Emperor who made love to her, which he did with a tact which proved quite successful. . . . She had never been made love to in her life and never had conversed with a man of the world on a footing of equality." Prince Albert proposes to the Duke of Beaufort to make his son his Lord in Waiting, but the Duke refuses: "if the Prince were not infatuated with his own dignity, he would never have contemplated the possibility of a young soldier resigning his office of A.D.C. to the Duke (of Wellington) to go and wait upon him at his trumpery and tiresome Court."

Almost all the quotations I have given show the rough edge of Greville's tongue, which won for him the nickname of "Gruncher." But these all come from the suppressed passages, and naturally it was the most disobliging remarks that Reeve chose to omit. His tampering with the text often spoilt Greville's wit. Thus, of Lord Cochrane, we now read: "It is a pity he ever committed a robbery: he is such a fine fellow and so shrewd and good humoured." Reeve replaced "committed a robbery" by "got into a scrape," and the joke was lost. Many such changes make the present edition incomparably superior to the old one. Greville's judgment was usually good, and his elaborate character sketches written at the deaths of the most important persons of

his time are just and persuasive. Lytton Strachey said of the book he was later to edit that it was "a good book, not a great one," and if you compare, as he did, Greville with St. Simon, this is incontrovertible. After reading thousands of pages of the Memoirs, we feel neither affection for, nor intimacy with, the writer. An inquisitive, intelligent, well-educated, sceptical and humane man of the world, with aristocratic connections and a Whiggish distaste for Radicals, Tories, and every form of cant, he would have made an admirable diplomatist, and might have made a successful politician. To himself and to his contemporaries his career seemed unworthy of his talents, but he may have hoped that his journals would win for him a lasting fame. He re-read his old journals at intervals, making excisions and adding notes, but not revising the text: "Very readable," he comments, or "Not uninteresting" or "Tolerably good and may be shown." Undeterred by his deafness and gout, he ran around day after day snapping up inside information, so that we can now watch nineteenth century history in the process of manufacture. You can call him a cold fish, but he was a truthful and gifted writer, and you cannot resist reading him.

It is a pity that Mr. Fulford in his excellent but too short introduction has not included what little we know of Greville from other sources. There are some characteristic anecdotes, such as Lady Graham's breaking with him because he showed inadequate agitation when their child was teething. Again, he refused to attend the Privy Council while Lord Derby was Prime Minister; and Lord Derby, being told of this, remarked that "he had not observed his absence, as he never knew whether it was John or Thomas who answered the bell." Also it is interesting that whereas Disraeli called the book a social outrage, and said its style was "without a happy expression," Mr. Gladstone praised Greville's power of drawing character, his liberal and equitable opinions, and his love of justice, summing him up as a good writer and an upright man. Here I agree, as usual, with Mr. Gladstone.

## MALLARME

INDEFATIGABLY distilling essences and intrincating spells, living in poetry as the saints have sought to live in God, Mallarmé, to the aesthete a hierophant, to the philistine a *reductio ad absurdum*, has been dead less than fifty years and is already a myth. The



simplicity of his life is no less remarkable than the abstruseness and rarity of his writings. The other great French poets of his century made themselves vivid by public energy or personal eccentricity, Lamartine in the February Revolution, Victor Hugo hurling chastisements from his island exile, Musset tossed by turbulent amours, Nerval hanging himself top-hatted from a lamp-post, Baudelaire enslaved simultaneously by his mother, by drugs and by an angry drab, Verlaine reeling between the confessional and the lupanar, Rimbaud ruthlessly discarding his genius to trade in Ethiopian slaves—each is rich in the idiosyncrasies that edify a legend. Then, by their side, a school-master, just not too inefficient to keep his job, his poverty genteel rather than picturesque, is seen alternating between his classroom and the poky flat where his wife and daughter darned in the lamplight. Mallarmé's imagination never spilled into the disorder of deeds; it was decanted, with superlative caution, into the crystal of language.

A life of Mallarmé, in over eight hundred pages, has recently been published in Paris by the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. The author, M. Henri Mondor, who is a painter as well as a writer, has for years been collecting manuscripts, letters, and other sorts of Mallarmeana. He rarely seeks to provide literary criticism or exegesis, but as biography the book seems definitive, and all the new material in this essay derives from M. Mondor's intelligent industry.

Etienne Mallarmé—called Stéphane from his earliest years—was born in Paris on March 18, 1842. His ancestors came from Burgundy, Lorraine, and Holland. His father and both his grandfathers were Civil Servants. His mother died when he was a child, his father remarried, and the boy was brought up by a devoted, pious and fussy grandmother. He did not distinguish himself at his lessons, and passed his matric. only at a second attempt. But at his school at Sens one of the masters was a young poet called des Essarts, who knew Victor Hugo, Gautier and Baudelaire. The boy made friends with him, and thus came to know Henri Cazalis, who later wrote good verse under the name of Jean Lahor, and who was the first to recognise in Mallarmé a poet of genius. At the age of twenty he was already writing sumptuous verse in the manner of Baudelaire, when he fell in love with a fair, unhappy-looking girl he saw in the street. She was a German governess, Marie Gerhard. He went to London, having decided to be a schoolmaster rather than a Civil Servant, and took her with him. There were agitations, indecisions about marriage, desperate partings. "Longtemps nous avons agité

nos mouchoirs, et, quand je n'ai plus vu le sien, j'ai sangloté à travers les rues. Je sens que je ne la reverrai jamais." This is one of the very few personal incidents I can find reflected in the poetry :

Un ennui, désolé par les cruels espoirs,  
Croît encore à l'adieu suprême des mouchoirs . . .

The farewell, in fact, was not final, and Mallarmé married Marie at the Oratory in London in 1863. He returned to France armed with a teacher's diploma in English, and obtained a post at the lycée of Tournon, not far from Valence. The salary was 1200 francs (£48) a year—and his daughter, Geneviève, was born a year later. He was moved to Besançon in 1866, to Avignon in 1867, to Paris in 1871, where he found the congenial friendship of other poets and of the impressionist painters. He continued to be a schoolmaster in the capital till 1893, when he retired with a pension. He died in 1898.

Mallarmé detested teaching, and on several occasions incurred the censure of his superiors. The headmaster, for instance, of the Lycée Fontanes in Paris somehow came across his writings : "productions insensées, en prose et en vers," he decided ; and added "Ceux qui lisent ces étranges élucubrations du cerveau de M. Mallarmé doivent s'étonner qu'il occupe une chaire au lycée Fontanes." The boys also found the poet easy game ; thus on the blackboard one day he found written up in mockery one of his lines :

*Je suis hanté ! L'Azur ! L'Azur ! L'Azur ! L'Azur !*

We get a glimpse of him teaching his class "Twinkle, twinkle little star," and treating them to an excursion on English food—"le Queen Mab's pudding, le Wyvern pudding, le Porcupine pudding." How far his knowledge of English extended has been a matter of dispute. His disciple Francis Viélé-Griffin, an American by birth, helped him to translate Whistler's *Ten O'clock*. I was told by him that Mallarmé's English was far from complete ; he thought, for instance, that a pigeonhole meant a dovecote. Apart from Poe, to whom he, like Baudelaire, attached an importance that it is difficult to understand, the only writers of English to whom I have found a reference in his writings are Shakespeare, Beckford, Hazlitt, Tennyson, Pater and Whistler. Swinburne corresponded with him, and submitted his French verses to him for correction. Whether Mallarmé knew the work of Donne, for instance, or Blake, or Browning, I cannot determine.

Odious as was the daily treadmill of the classroom, Mallarmé

preferred it to the profanation entailed, in his opinion, by journalism. He wrote occasionally for foreign periodicals, such as *The Athenaeum*; he even edited for a few months a fashion-paper, but in his notes on millinery he did not deviate very far from his customary style :

Le chapeau, c'est bien autre chose ! Voilà du velours et de la soie, voilà du feutre ou une forme (qui n'est souvent que l'absence même de forme) et je puis vous parler une heure ; faites de tout cela quelque chose, même avec des fleurs, des plumes et mes paroles . . .

In a series of lectures he once gave in Belgium he made even less concession to his audiences. "Un homme, au rêve habitué," he began, "vient ici vous parler d'un autre, qui est mort." Then he celebrated the genius of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, in such terms as these :

A la suite d'un de ces abords subits sur le trottoir, brisé ainsi qu'un vitre, d'où s'écroulait la joaillerie, le ton, nul l'oubliait, comme si c'était étrange, et contraire ou oiseux, qu'il vécût, dont on disait, se prenant à part, entre le six ou sept que nous fûmes à le connaître ; "J'ai vu Villiers !"

The audience, he reported in a letter to his daughter, was stunned ; but subjugated by his gravity and the convinced thunder of his voice. To this tour attaches a pleasing legend, based on the fact that he could not be trusted to dress himself properly when away from his vigilant family. At Ghent—the story goes—his collar and ready-made tie (a *lavallière*) having come undone, "il aurait prié l'adjoint du bourgmestre, qui était officiellement son garde du corps, de lui indiquer une maison spéciale 'où l'une de ces dames' consentirait certainement à lui rendre le petit service de lui mieux fixer sa cravate." The exquisite politeness of the phrase is, at the least, *ben trovato*. Mallarmé also once lectured at Oxford and Cambridge, where he gazed at the dons with envious admiration—"une présence d'hommes, uniques par l'Europe et au monde, qui à mon sens, domine la pierre historique, comme je fus surtout étonné d'eux. Aujourd'hui, choisissant, à parfaire, une impression de beauté, véritablement la fleur et le résultat ce sont les *Fellows*." These "délicieux messieurs," as he calls them, were treated to a discourse that is all but impenetrable, even when one is reading, and very carefully, each phrase. Belgium and England were the only foreign countries visited by the poet who has given to *Wanderlust* its most memorable expression—in the verses ending "Mais ô mon âme entend le chant des matelots !"

Only one other exterior event kindles our curiosity. This impoverished, orderly, middle-aged schoolmaster, unknown except to a few almost similarly obscure writers and painters, enjoyed for years the favours of a dazzling and triumphant courtesan, Méry Laurent. She was kept in opulence by the American dentist, Evans, known to history because he managed the escape from France in 1870 of the Empress Eugénie. One of her *amants de coeur* had been Manet, who was an intimate friend of Mallarmé. He made many portraits of her, in which we see a cumulation of auburn hair, and eyebrows lifted high above a delicately pointed nose. After Manet's death Mallarmé became her lover ; the affair was serene and durable ; far from objecting, Evans used to take Mallarmé with Méry to Royat, forming a trio that teases one's imagination. Her choice of Mallarmé is immeasurably creditable to the lady, and our esteem, I think, overflows on the society in which such astonishing conjunctions could occur. Mallarmé discovered a stimulus to his imagination not only in her splendid person (his verse is rich in erotic imagery) but in the extravagance of her toilet, the luxury of her table and all her surroundings—even the cornice of her bedroom was upholstered in satin. The elaborations of material refinement were to Mallarmé what natural beauty or drugs have been to other poets : a console table, a looking-glass, a lace curtain, a cut-glass flower-vase, provided themes for some of his most elaborate poems ; he wrote a whole series of verses for fans ; and in Méry Laurent he found something of what he had dreamt when, as a young man, he made Hérodiade speak of "Le blond torrent de mes cheveux immaculés," together with the then prized embellishment of scents, precious metals and "froides pierreries." (We are in the world of *Salammbô*, *A Rebours*, and the paintings of Gustave Moreau.) Of Méry it is not to be supposed that she understood, or thought she understood, a word that Mallarmé wrote, apart from the pretty cracker-mottoes he composed for her to send with her presents. But one must, I suggest, allow her a measure of intuition ; she liked Manet's pictures before she saw the handsome artist, and then came to adopt the opinions of his circle : also she must have been responsive to Mallarmé's personal distinction. With the manners of an eighteenth-century courtier, he combined a wit delightful in surprises. The evidence for his irresistible charm is certain ; and we can catch the traces of this in Manet's portrait of him. Remove the poet's moustache, suppose him dark instead of blond ; at once we are reminded of M. Cocteau by the almond-shaped face, the sickle eyebrows, and the shrewd squirrelish scrutiny.

But we must tear ourselves away from the delicious spectacle of Mallarmé in the alcove of Mme Laurent to consider him as he has most frequently been described. It is a Tuesday in the Nineties, and the sitting-room in the Rue de Rome has been prepared for the hebdomadal rite. There are a dozen chairs ; on the round table under the lamp in its red silk shade, Geneviève has placed a vase of roses, a tobacco-jar, and some Japanese ashtrays. On the walls there are paintings by Manet, Berthe Morisot, Whistler, Odilon Redon, and Gauguin. A cast by Rodin stands on an eighteenth century console. The white stove has been stoked, Mallarmé in his carpet slippers is teasing his adored cat, Lilith. The bell rings—who this evening will be the listeners ? Leconte de Lisle, Manet, Banville, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Laforgue are dead. Maupassant has become mad, Verlaine is in hospital or dead-drunk, Huysmans is given up to devotion ; but Heredia still sometimes comes, and besides the faithful symbolist disciples, Viélé-Griffin, René Ghil, Fontainas, Henri de Régnier, Robert de Montesquiou, there may be Barrès or Rémy de Gourmont, and there are sure to be some of the young catechumens who are beginning to be writers, Claudel, Gide, Francis Jammes, Léon-Paul Fargue, Valéry. Some foreigners too enjoy the privilege : Verhaeren, Maeterlinck, Rodenbach, Arthur Symons, Wilde, George Moore, Charles Whibley, Stefan George, Munch, and—one of Mallarmé's old and close friends—Whistler. Vuillard may come, who is to illustrate the host's latest and most adventurous experiment *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard* ; or Debussy, who inspired by Mallarmé's poem, has just composed *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. (Je croyais l'avoir moi-même mis en musique," Mallarmé said ; adding that the music went positively farther "dans la nostalgie et la lumière, avec finesse, avec malaise, avec richesse." The five nouns are notable as a definition by the poet of the virtues at which he had aimed.) Perhaps it is this evening that the caustic Degas arrives grumbling : he has been trying to write verse—"Quel métier, j'ai perdu toute ma journée avec un sacré sonnet sans avancer d'un pas. . . Et cependant ce ne sont pas les idées qui me manquent. . . J'en suis plein. . . J'en ai trop." "Ce n'est pas avec les idées qu'on fait les sonnets, Degas," Mallarmé answers, "c'est avec les mots." When the guests have arrived, Geneviève and her mother disappear into the bedroom they share ; Mallarmé lights his red clay pipe, and the enchantment begins.

On entrait chez Mallarmé ; c'était le soir ; on trouvait là d'abord un grand silence ; à la porte tous les bruits mouraient ;

Mallarmé commençait à parler d'une voix douce, musicale, inoubliable. . . . Chose étrange ; IL PENSAIT AVANT DE PARLER. Et pour la première fois, près de lui, on sentait, on touchait, la réalité de la pensée ; ce que nous cherchions, ce que nous voulions, ce que nous adorions dans la vie, existait ; un homme, ici, avait tout sacrifié à cela. . . .

Thus Gide recalls the effect ; but of what Mallarmé said the accounts are inadequate. From his articles in prose, too, we get little help, for this is no less elliptical and recondite than his verse. And Edmund Gosse assures us that "in his conversation, which was marked by good sense no less than by a singular delicacy of perception, there was no trace of the wilful perversity of his written style." Some of his letters, however, may give us a hint. The talk was always about the arts and abstract thought—I think Mallarmé was virgin of political knowledge, and hardly looked at the daily newspaper. There was nothing professorial in his manner ; his gestures held a prelatical suavity, but fancy and wit played about his words, which were "un incessant va-et-vient entre le sublime et le familier." Something would be said about the recent books—Mallarmé was burdened with the incessant homage of volumes produced by his disciples, so distressingly more prolific than himself. The Lamoureux concert of the previous Sunday might then be touched on : Mallarmé went each week to what he called his Vespers, depending on the great breaking waves of music to wash from his mind all the dust of actuality. Thus the conversation mounted into the rarer air, in which the others fell behind and the gentle warlock found himself alone among the glaciers of Aesthetics. His divagations started usually from some most unexpected and unpromising detail he had noticed, which led to the analogies between the arts, the irresistible exactions of the poet's calling, the techniques for expression that beckoned siren-like towards the impossible. Or a question about his early departure from the influence of Baudelaire and the Parnassians might set the fountain throwing its various and parabolic jets.

"J'ai voulu rester implacablement dans mon sujet. L'effet produit, sans une dissonance, sans une fioriture, même adorable, qui distraît—voilà ce que je cherchais. Et ç'a été une terrible difficulté de combiner dans une juste harmonie, l'élément dramatique hostile à l'idée de poésie juste et subjective, avec la sérénité et le calme des lignes nécessaires à la beauté. J'écrivais *Hérodiade* avec terreur, car j'inventais une langue qui devait nécessairement jaillir d'une poétique très nouvelle, que je

pourrais définir en ces deux mots : Peindre non la chose mais l'effet qu'elle produit. . . .

Un vieux rêve avait installé en moi comme une grotte marine où il s'est donné de curieux spectacles, si je ne m'abuse. . . . Un pauvre poète, qui n'est que poète—c'est-à-dire un instrument qui résonne sous les doigts des diverses sensations—est muet quand il vit dans un milieu où rien ne l'émeut, puis ses cordes se distendent, et viennent la poussière et l'oubli. . . .”

A silence, and next a *scherzo* : “Quand je rencontre un homme qui mène a son bras une belle femme, j'ai envie de m'approcher de lui, de lui sauter au cou, en disant ‘Comme je vous remercie de l'aimer ainsi et de tout ce que vous m'évitez et que j'eusse sans doute fait pour elle, des fautes, des folies, des crimes peut-être. . . .”

And so to and fro between fantasy and the pursuit of the absolute : “Je cherche à construire un poème d'une pureté que l'homme n'a pas atteinte—et n'atteindra peut-être jamais—car il se pourrait que je ne fusse le jouet d'une illusion, et que la machine humaine ne soit pas assez parfaite pour arriver à de tels résultats. . . .”

Then an oblique anecdote about himself. “Vous ne pleurez donc jamais en vers, Monsieur ?” on a demandé à un poète : ‘Ni ne me mouche !’ il a cru pouvoir répondre. . . .”

“La Poésie est l'expression, par le langage humain ramené à son rythme essentiel, du sens mystérieux de l'existence : elle doue ainsi d'authenticité notre séjour et constitue la seule tâche spirituelle. La poésie n'est que l'expression musicale et suraiguë, émotionnante, d'un état d'âme. . . . Evoquer, dans une ombre expresse, l'objet tu, par des mots allusifs, jamais directs, se réduisant à du silence égal, comporte tentative proche de créer. Le vers, trait incantatoire ! et ouvre la rime une similitude avec les ronds, parmi l'herbe, de la fée ou du magicien. . . .”

“Pour moi le cas d'un poète, en cette société qui ne le permet de vivre, c'est le cas d'un homme qui s'isole pour sculpter son propre tombeau. . . .”

An interval to fill his pipe, then he turns to Paul Valéry and invites that precocious youth to repeat a phrase in which he had proved his discipleship ; whereupon the lisp and Mediterranean accent of Valéry are heard describing his notion of the poet : “Ce n'est plus le délirant échevelé, celui qui écrit tout un poème dans une nuit de fièvre, c'est un froid savant, presque un algébriste, au service d'un rêveur raffiné.” Somebody, perhaps George Moore, since to foreigners such temerities come more easily, quotes an old letter he has seen from Mallarmé to Cazalis

about an early poem : “ . . . le sens, s’il en a un (mais je me consolerais du contraire grâce à la dose de poésie qu’il renferme, ce me semble), est évoqué par un mirage interne des mots même.” Mallarmé smiles, I fancy, neither accepting nor denying. It is nearly thirty years since this provocative remark, and even then it may have been a *boutade*. And the guests disperse, trying to remember the spells to which they have been subjugated. “ Tout au monde ”—had he said that, or was memory already a traitor?—“ Tout au monde existe pour aboutir à un livre.” His talk, like his verse, sprang from the detection of analogies ; and a line hitherto unpublished from his latest writing summarises best what they had been listening to :

Divers rapprochements scintillés absolus.

The poet, his solitude recovered, was wrestling—for sleep rarely visited him—with the scene he had for twenty years been seeking to add to *Hérodiade* :

A quel psaume de nul antique antiphonaire .

Où planer ici comme un viril tonnerre

Du cachot fulguré pour s’ensevelir où ? . . .

(Ten years previously he had said to Dujardin, “ Je raye le mot *comme* du vocabulaire,” but the manuscript shows the word.) He continued the implacable task of exalting the majestic sentence of over twenty lines to an ultimate perfection, though this might be beyond the present power of men to apprehend.\*

The English are profoundly a sceptical people, sympathetic to eccentricity but dismayed by devoutness pushed to its logical

\* For those more adept in Mallarmé I append the continuation of the to me quite recondite passage, hitherto unpublished :

Sauf amplificatrice irruption ou trou  
Grand ouvert par un vol ébloui de vitrage  
Bloc contre bloc jonchant le lugubre entourage,  
Le fantôme accoudé du pâle écho latent  
Sous un voile debout ne dissimule tant  
Supérieurement à de noirs plis prophète  
Toujours que de ne pas perpétuer du faite  
Divers rapprochements scintillés absolus :  
Et, , plus  
Insoumis au joyau géant qui les attache  
Ce crépusculaire et fatidique panache  
De dentelles à flots torses sur le linon  
Taciturne vacille en le signe que non,  
Vains les noeuds éplorés, la nudité fausse  
Ensemble que l’agrafe avec ses feux rehausse,  
Plus abominé mais placide ambassadeur  
Le circonstanciel plat nu dans sa splendeur  
Tout ambiguïté par ce bord muet fuie  
Se fourbit, on dirait, s’époussette ou s’essuie. . . .

One verse is only outlined, and there is no attempt to accord the poet’s final style with the translucence of the original *Hérodiade*.



conclusion. Unfruitful for hundreds of years in saints, our soil has grown neither a Curé d'Ars nor a Mallarmé. To mitigate therefore what may seem—despite Méry Laurent—the intolerably ascetic features of my subject, I must place a word about Valvins. In this village on a reach of the Seine near Fontainebleau, Mallarmé had part of a peasant's house, a governess-cart drawn by a circus-pony called Gobemouche, and a little sailing-boat. In a big straw hat, at the tiller, letting out his jib to catch a catspaw he saw ruffling the willows, the poet presents to our insular weakness a more congenial picture. But he is still talking of high matters, and the immaculate sail still reminds him of "le vide papier que la blancheur défend," the provocative, frigid paper that it is his inexorable calling, with what ritual and precaution, to violate. Here, by the watery looking-glass, the poet died, who had discovered in mirrors the symbol of his obsession, *le Néant*.

At the age of twenty Mallarmé defined the aesthetic to which he remained faithful: "Toute chose sacrée et qui veut demeurer sacrée s'enveloppe de mystère. . . La musique nous offre un exemple. . . Depuis qu'il y a des poètes, il n'a pas été inventé, pour l'écartement des importuns, une langue immaculée . . . O fermoirs d'or des vieux missels ! O hiéroglyphes inviolés des rouleaux de papyrus ! . . Que les masses lisent la morale, mais de grace ne leur donnez pas votre poésie à gâter. O Poètes, vous avez toujours été orgueilleux ; soyez plus, devenez dédaigneux."

Since Mallarmé, the poets have not failed to be disdainful ; and if one raises a plaintive objection, his supreme example can be brought in evidence :

A la nue accablante tu  
Basse de basalte et de laves  
A même les échos esclaves  
Par une trompe sans vertu . . .

Picasso, because he has the power to draw like Raphael or Ingres, can create a valid work of art with the wrapping of a cigarette-packet and a few scribbles ; and fools rush in to imitate him, though they cannot draw even like Sir Frank Dicksee. The great masters are perilous as examples, as well as necessary. In any case, for the obscurity that comes from private allusion or from negligence Mallarmé provides no excuse. Not a word, he says, on which he had not spent hours, and most of his poems took years to complete. Further I maintain that his glory depends less on his last works—*Un coup de dés* seems to me misconceived—than upon *L'après-midi d'un Faune*, *Hérodiade*, and such poems as

*Brise Marine* and, already sufficiently opaque, *Le vierge le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui*. The first poems in the manner of Baudelaire already announce genius. Here is part of a sonnet, called *Naissance du Poète*, that I will quote because it is curious as well as hitherto unpublished :

Parce que d'un lit grand comme une sacristie  
Il voit sur la pendule un couple antique et fol ;  
Ou qu'il n'a pas sommeil, et que, sans modestie,  
Sa jambe sous les draps frôle une jambe au vol,

Un niais met sous lui sa femme froide et sèche,  
Contre ce bonnet blanc frotte son casque à mèche  
Et travaille en soufflant inexorablement ;

Et de ce qu'une nuit, sans rage et sans tempête,  
Ces deux êtres se sont accouplés en dormant,  
O Shakspeare et toi, Dante, il peut naître un poète !

More significant are some earlier versions of poems that have become famous. Here is an example that shows the process by which he made his lines richer and more dense :

Pauvre, voici cent sous. . . Longtemps tu cajolas  
—Ce vice te manquait—le songe d'être avare ?  
Ne les enfouis pas pour qu'on te sonne un glas.

Evoque de l'Enfer un péché plus bizarre.  
Tu peux ensanglanter tes brumeux horizons  
D'un rêve ayant l'éclat vermeil d'une fanfare.

Compare the final version : \*

\* With apologies for their obviousness or insufficiency, I append a few notes based upon a comparison of the two versions. The title of the poem has been changed from *Le Mendiant* to *L'Aumône*, and in Line 1 poverty has been aggravated into beggary. The sum of money has been generalised into a bag, to harmonise with the powerful new metaphor in Line 2. In Line 3 single coins are introduced to continue the image of the knell, the strokes of which fall from the steeple in metallic drips. The alliteration of nasals in Line 2 suggests the whining of a puny infant, and the rhythm of the third line makes it long and full of intervals like a continuous tolling. Line 4 : avarice is not a bizarre sin, so the comparative is banished ; and, more important, the precious metal is again emphasised instead of the abstract and extraneous notion of Hell. Line 5 : a trope and a rhythm that might be Baudelaire's or even Hugo's are replaced by a typically Mallarmean line, the sense of which I find uncertain. "Nous" I take to be the rich who kiss the gold of which their fists are full ; and the beggar (Line 6) is told similarly to put his lips to the metal,—but in order to blow it into the curves of a trumpet. (In the *Après-midi* Mallarmé twice uses similar imagery about the creative power of breath, which turns a reed into music and an empty grape-skin into the coloured transparency of glass.) The influence of Baudelaire, so conspicuous in the first version, written in 1864, hardly shows in the second, published in 1887, until the last line of the poem, with its dandified bravado : "Et surtout ne va pas, frère, acheter du pain." I am confident that the definitive version was finished many years before its publication. Not only is it placed in the very incomplete "Edition complète" before a poem dated 1877, but it lacks the assonances and inversions characteristic of Mallarmé's later verse.

Prends ce sac, Mendiant ! tu ne le cajolas  
Sénile nourrisson d'une tétine avare  
Afin de pièce à pièce en égoutter ton glas.

Tire du métal cher quelque péché bizarre  
Et vaste comme nous, les poings pleins, le baisons  
Souffles-y qu'il se torde ! une ardente fanfare.

Similarly here are the opening lines of the *Monologue d'un Faune*, a guide convenient though not indispensable to the *Après-midi* we know :

J'avais des Nymphes ! Est-ce un songe ? Non, le clair  
Rubis des seins levés embrase encore l'air  
Immobile et je bois les soupirs.

Où sont-elles ?

O feuillage, si tu protèges ces mortelles  
Rends-les-moi, par Avril qui gonfle tes rameaux  
Nubiles—(Je languis encore de tels maux)—  
Et par la nudité des roses, O feuillage !  
Rien. Je les veux. Mais si ce beau couple au pillage  
N'était qu'illusion de tes sens fabuleux ?

Here is the final version, with the sensuality made less precise :

Ces nymphes, je les veux perpétuer.

Si clair,

Leur incarnat léger, qu'il voltige dans l'air  
Assoupi de sommeils touffus.

Aimai-je un rêve ?

Mon doute, amas de nuit ancienne, s'achève  
En maint rameau subtil, qui, demeuré les vrais  
Bois mêmes, prouve, hélas ! que bien seul je m'offrais  
Pour triomphe la faute idéale de roses.  
Réfléchissons. . .

ou si les femmes dont tu gloses

Figurent un souhait de tes sens fabuleux !

The poem is historically so important as well as of so capital a beauty that I must give another extract from the hitherto unpublished early version :

J'allais, quand à mes pieds s'entremêlent, fleuries  
De la pudeur d'aimer en ce lit hasardeux,  
Deux dormeuses parmi l'extase d'être deux.  
Je les saisis sans les désenlacer, et vole  
A des jardins, haïs par l'ombrage frivole,  
De roses tisonnant d'impudeur au soleil,  
Où notre amour, à l'air consumé soit pareil. . . .

The scene is said to have been suggested by the Boucher "Pan and Syrinx" in the National Gallery. Here is the final state of this passage :

J'accours ; quand, à mes pieds, s'entrejoignent (meurtries  
 De la langueur goûtée à ce mal d'être deux)  
 Des dormeuses parmi leurs seuls bras hasardeux ;  
 Je les ravis, sans les désenlacer, et vole  
 A ce massif, haï par l'ombrage frivole,  
 De roses tarissant tout parfum au soleil,  
 Où notre ébat au jour consumé soit pareil.

The version written in 1865 is here surprisingly close to the poem we know, which was completed in 1875. (Refused for the *Troisième Parnasse Contemporain* by the stupidity of François Coppée and Anatole France, it was first published, in an *édition de luxe* with illustrations by Manet, in 1876.) One more comparison : the last verse of the early *Monologue d'un Faune* runs :

Adieu, femmes; duo de vierges quand je vins.

In the definitive version this boast vanishes into shadow :

Couple, adieu; je vais voir l'ombre que tu devins.

The *Après-midi* shows Mallarmé preoccupied with the relation between reality and the product of the imagination—a relation that he believed to be an identity, for he carried his idealism (in the metaphysical sense) to its extreme. "Artifice," he wrote, "que la réalité, bon à fixer l'intellect moyen entre les mirages d'un fait." Let me quote from Téodor de Wyzewa's *Nos Maîtres* :

A chacun de ses vers il s'est efforcé d'attacher plusieurs sens superposés. Chacun de ses vers, dans son intention, devait être à la fois une image plastique, l'expression d'une pensée, l'énoncé d'un sentiment et un symbole philosophique.

I think one may accept this account of Mallarmé's intentions, especially as it was written by a disciple who knew it would meet the master's eye ; but it would be unwise to take Mallarmé's metaphysics very seriously. He thought, says Thibaudet (whom I consider the best of recent critics), "with images rather than ideas, with words rather than sentences." One must add that Mallarmé intended each verse not only to bear these superimposed senses but to carry a melody. He was insistent upon the analogies between poetry and music. He envied particularly the composer because the material in which he worked did not possess a practical as well as an aesthetic value. Words unluckily were the small change of daily life, rubbed and greasy coins, which the poet had so to select and arrange that their vulgar usefulness could be forgotten. This, I suggest, was the principal

reason for Mallarmé's obscurity. To achieve "une langue immaculée," he made his diction more and more labyrinthine.\*

A further reason for the difficulty of these writings may be that Mallarmé hoped the effort demanded of the readers would provide them with the valuable equivalent of the creative effort put forward by the poet. This seems to me a dubious ambition, for the necessity of intellectual effort may interfere with the direct impact of a work of art. It is true, however, that one never tires for instance of Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*, partly at least because one never unravels the final knot of its intricacies; and the more one reads Mallarmé, the greater his fascination. Mallarmé's gusto for continuity and condensation also rendered his writing more recondite. The whole poem is often poured into a single sentence—he was a virtuoso of syntax—and the natural order of the words is outrageously changed, so that his verse gains the compactness of Latin. In this respect it has analogies both with the art of mosaic—so intimately tessellated is the language—and again with the carvings of a Romanesque capital, which gain vitality by being so vigorously compressed.

Despite such analogies, the writing of Mallarmé belongs conspicuously to his epoch. The poetry is carefully imprecise as well as dense: he abhors the sharp contours of a description, and concentrates upon evoking what is unmentioned, so that he has preoccupations in common not only with Claude Monet but with the vaporous Carrière, and even with Loie Fuller. The cold and rigid metal-work of the Parnassians being no less alien to him than the generous but often facile eloquence of Lamartine and Victor Hugo, he resumes the tradition of preciosity that Boileau had almost succeeded in expelling from literature, a tradition that in the applied arts had continued to flourish through the eighteenth century. The *Art nouveau* of the Nineties showed, though infelicitously, a filiation to the *Louis quinze* style; and Mallarmé for all his exalted aims often presents himself as a

\* Mallarmé's verse began to be hermetic when he was aged about twenty-six. At this period he wrote his first version of the sonnet that begins "Ses purs ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx." In this he used the word "ptyx," unknown to Littré. (It occurs in Victor Hugo's *Le Satyre*, but here I feel sure it was a mistake for "Pnyx," the knoll on the Acropolis.) Some critics have supposed that Mallarmé invented the word "ptyx" as a symbol of meaninglessness, for it is qualified in the poem as "aboli bibelot d'inanité sonore." But in the first version the line runs "insolite vaisseau d'inanité sonore," which confirms, I think, the suggestion now generally adopted that "ptyx" here means a shell, which held to the ear is sonorous as with the rumour of the sea. πτυξ, in fact, means a fold and might thus serve to suggest the plication of a shell. I cannot take to M. Mauron's theory that it here means a rhyme. (It is pleasing to discover in M. Mondor's book, published in Paris under the German heel, courteous references to the English translation of Mallarmé by Roger Fry, with notes by M. Mauron.)

master of the rococo. To ride a bicycle he describes as "enrouler, entre les jarrets, sur la chaussée, selon l'instrument en faveur, la fiction d'un éblouissant rail continu." One remembers, too, *Placet futile* (I quote from the earlier version) :

Nommez nous . . . pour qu'Amour ailé d'un éventail  
M'y peigne flûte aux doigts endormant ce bercail  
Princesse, nommez nous berger de vos sourires,\*

His prose is even more continually and distractingly interrupted by qualifications than that of Henry James's last period; and he aggravated the reader's perplexity by inventing a personal system of punctuation that grouped words, independently of syntax, in the associations he had determined. His verse is technically the most artful, I think, in the French language. He delights in varying the place of the tonic accents, in assonances and alliterations, in the emphasis obtainable from *rejets* and *faux-rejets*. But on such nice points of technique I can presume to add nothing to the masterly analysis contained in M. Thibaudet's *La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé*.

In 1896 the youthful Proust published an essay, thought to envisage Mallarmé, declaring that the desire to displease the public was no less mediocre than the desire to please it. But Mallarmé, I think, was honestly little interested in the public. When his writings were found difficult to understand, he professed astonishment: "Ils ne savent pas lire." In his twenties, it is amusing to remember, the *Faune* had been planned originally as a monologue for Coquelin; and *Hérodiade* was similarly destined for the Comédie française. (The theatre, Mallarmé was delighted to learn, already possessed scenery of the appropriate period!) When such ingenuousness was dissipated, he became averse from publication. He disliked the attention of persons incapable of sympathising with his purposes. There has never been an artist less concerned with making known either his personality or his productions. Believing that only a very small proportion of human beings were congenitally able to

\* A French friend, M. Pierre Bourdon, now admired throughout his country for his broadcasts from London, has pointed out to me the particular relevance of the poem in which Mallarmé expresses his desire to

Imiter le Chinois au cœur limpide et fin  
De qui l'extase pure est de peindre la fin  
Sur les tasses de neige à la lune ravie  
D'une bizarre fleur qui parfume sa vie  
Transparente, la fleur qu'il a sentie, enfant,  
Au filigrane bleu de l'anse se greffant . . .

His own ambition thus resumed itself in taking a delicate or even trivial subject, remembered perhaps with the intensity that belongs to childhood, and applying to it the furthest refinements of expressive craftsmanship.

make the effort required for the education of aesthetic sensibility, he was too logical to wish for public approval. While some great artists are easy, not indeed to fathom, but to approach, others are impenetrable except to the man who has given himself a specialised training. These need to apologise no more than the equally abstruse masters of mathematics or metaphysics ; but if they complain of neglect, they become contemptible. Gently but obstinately aloof, Mallarmé preserved a dignity that commands our veneration.

He can, no doubt, be held to typify in his ivory tower a *bourgeoisie* appalled by the hideous and visible consequences of its own greed. Sober history shows that he was paid by the State, and never earned more than £200 a year. His life, no less than his art, seems to me exemplary. One day he was found in the forest of Fontainebleau with a spiked stick, removing the litter that disfigured the mottled glades : "J'aurai demain Régnier et quelques amis," he explained ; "Je prépare les lieux." It is preposterous that a just concern for the well-being of the majority should debar the preparation of places for the *élite*. The more we dilapidate the fictitious distinctions based upon the gift of a man, or of his ancestors, for making profits, the more signal becomes the genuine superiority of genius. Productivity is now often held up to us as the ultimate purpose of human life, and the notion of quality is thus menaced with oblivion. One may agree that capitalism is vile in its ethic and obsolete in its technique, but would it not be a pleasing surprise to discover in its more violent opponents some sign that they recognise the value of such a man as Stéphane Mallarmé ? His intentions seem to me even more important than his achievements, though these include some of the most beautiful verses ever contrived. He may indeed be thought a failure, in so far as he never managed to extend the limits of human expression to the point that he hoped. The significance of a forest was for him epitomised in its tallest points where it vanished into the emptiness of air. Similarly he was intent upon lifting language to the farthest fineness at the summit of human responsiveness, and on the brink, as it were, of silence. Such a design may seem excessive, but how futile the diurnal and agonising evolution of man must appear, if it is not justified by pleasures continually more refined and more rewarding. To the man of letters, at any rate, Mallarmé must figure as the archetype of heroism.

## MR. EZRA POUND

MR. EZRA POUND's influence on Mr. T. S. Eliot is admitted, and might be compared with Bowles's influence on Coleridge. But in fact Mr. Pound's verse also displays intrinsic merits: not only has it a new tune, but the tune can be delicate and good. When, therefore, I read a number of years ago an essay by him called *How to Read*, I supposed that it might be a very elaborate practical joke. He has now reprinted this essay, together with others, in a book oddly entitled *Polite Essays\** and his publishers go so far as to say that Mr. Pound enjoys the reputation "among the discerning of having been the most fructifying influence upon literary criticism of his time." Evidently we are meant to take *How to Read* seriously. This is no easy task.

The essay begins with a fragment of autobiography. Mr. Pound, it appears, wished to edit a twelve-volume anthology

in which each poem was chosen not merely because it was a nice poem or a poem Aunt Hepsy liked, but because it contained an invention, a definite contribution to the art of verbal expression. With this in mind, I approached a respected agent. He was courteous, he was even openly amazed at the list of three hundred items which I offered as an indication of outline. No autochthonous Briton had ever, to his professed belief, displayed familiarity with so vast a range, but he was too indolent to recast my introductory letter into a form suited to commerce.

The project was turned down, according to Mr. Pound, because it would have effected a change in public taste and reduced the financial value of *The Golden Treasury*. "I sought the banks of the Seine. Against ignorance one might struggle, and even against organic stupidity, but against a so vast vested interest the lone odds were too heavy." Mr. Pound's essay is a short guide compiled on a similar scheme to this defeated project.

The books that a man needs to know in order to "get his bearings," in order to have a sound judgment of any bit of writing that may come before him, are very few. . . . Limiting ourselves to the authors who actually invented something, or who are the "first known examples" of the process in working order, we find. . . .

The list must be compressed, and shorn of its comments. Homer, Sappho, Catullus, Ovid, Propertius, the Anglo-Saxon *Seafarer*

\* I wish to make it clear that my comments on Mr. Pound were first published some years before the War, in which he is now playing his part by broadcasting from Rome anti-American and anti-British propaganda.



"and some cursory notice of some medieval narrative." And "then, in contrast the troubadours," Guido Cavalcanti and Dante; Villon; Voltaire, "that is to say, some incursion into his critical writings, not into his attempts at fiction and drama"; Stendhal "(at least a book and a half)"; Flaubert "(omitting *Salammô* and the *Tentation*)" and the Goncourts; Gautier; Corbière; Laforgue; Rimbaud. Add Confucius "in full." Had Mr. Pound given us this list as the names of the writers by whom he had himself been most influenced, we might (if we happened for other reasons to take any interest in him) have thought it pertinent. But this is put forward as a list of the great "inventors" and as a "minimum basis for a sound and liberal education in letters." The more one examines it, the more extraordinary it appears. Mr. Pound has a good word for the Elizabethan translators and for translations by Swinburne, Rossetti, and FitzGerald. ("Our contact," he writes, "with Oriental poetry begins with FitzGerald's *Rubâiyât*"—and yet one would have guessed from Mr. Pound's Christian name that he had been brought up on the Old Testament.) Browning is the only English author, it seems, who has no French or European parallel. Also "he is a better poet than Landor, who was perhaps the only complete and serious man of letters ever born in these islands." (Mr. Pound, I fancy, was born in the United States.) Shakespeare is omitted:

I doubt if anyone has acquired discrimination in studying "The Elizabethans." You have grace, richness of language, abundance, but you have probably nothing that isn't replaceable by something else, no ornament that would not have done just as well in some other connection, or for which some other figure of rhetoric couldn't have served, or which couldn't have been distilled from literary antecedents.

So let us pass over any insular or provincial admiration we may feel for the originality of Shakespeare, Milton, Browne, Dryden (he was the chief inventor of English prose as a medium for clear thought, so Mr. Pound comprehensibly dismisses him as a "lunk-head"), Defoe, Sterne, and Wordsworth. Let us look beyond our narrow shores. Aeschylus might be considered an inventor, but Mr. Pound dismisses him as rhetorical. Thucydides? A journalist. Tacitus is not mentioned.

Before Stendhal there is probably nothing in prose that does not also exist in verse or that can't be done by verse just as well as by prose. Even the method of annihilating imbecility employed by Voltaire, Bayle, and Lorenzo Valla can be managed quite as well in rhymed couplets.

One wonders why Mr. Pound bothers to include Voltaire in his list, especially as he excludes his novels. And though Racine and La Fontaine owed a debt to Greek writers, they seem to me rather original. Is not Balzac a more "inventive" writer than Stendhal? And one looks vainly for the names of Victor Hugo and Baudelaire. But the inclusions in this list are even more surprising than the exclusions. Gautier and Laforgue and Tristan Corbière, for instance, were intelligent minor poets, whose influence, except perhaps on Mr. Pound, has not been very important. But with Mr. Pound's remark about Laforgue one can wholeheartedly agree. "Laforgue is not like any preceding poet. He is not ubiquitously like Propertius." Indeed he is not; and this is a remark which gains in richness the more one considers it.

I know of no critic with greater pretensions to learning than Mr. Pound. But, surprisingly, his remarks frequently betray to a certain insensitiveness to the languages. *Un Coeur Simple* he calls *Coeur Simple*, *Trois Contes* he calls *Les Trois Contes*, he speaks of "les mouvements de coeur" when he seems to mean "les mouvements du coeur," and the accents in his French are little more conventional than they are in his Greek. Where he means *minutiae*, he writes *minutia*, apparently under the impression that this is a neuter plural. And I commend the following passage to your attention:

It is not quite enough to have the general idea that the Chinese (more particularly Rihaku and Omakitsu) attained the known maximum of *phanopoeia*, due perhaps to the nature of their written ideograph, or to wonder whether Rimbaud is, at rare moments, their equal. One wants one's knowledge on more definite terms.

At this point the neophyte obediently following the Pound Way to Culture is likely, I fear, to find himself in difficulties. For he will not discover Rihaku and Omakitsu in the standard works, either English or French, upon Chinese poetry. To anyone even vaguely familiar with translations from the Chinese it will indeed be obvious that these polysyllabic names are not Chinese but Japanese. And if you have the energy to pursue the matter, you will at last discover that Rihaku is the name given in Japan to the famous Li Po, and that Omakitsu conceals the person of the poet-painter Wang Wei. One wonders what motives Mr. Pound can possibly have for setting such elaborate obstructions in the way of his disciples.

Mr. Pound is no less singular in his opinions about painting and music. He includes Ambrogio da Predis, of all men, among

the six painters he mentions as "axes of reference," and, in another essay, writes :

To hear Toscanini give Falstaff or Fidelio is part however of education. To hear any other man conduct these operas would probably be intolerable. They are both highly unsatisfactory to anyone with aural discretion of an high order. . . . The beastly Beethoven contributed. . . .

But is it necessary to quote further the musical opinions of a man so aurally discreet that he can call Beethoven "beastly" ? Mr. Pound's *How to Read*, he tells us, "is the result of twenty-seven years' thought on the subject and a résumé of conclusions. That may be a reason for giving it some consideration." I have given it some consideration, not because it resumes twenty-seven years of Mr. Pound's thought, but because it may come into the hands of young persons with no college tutor to guide them, but ambitious, none the less, of cultivating their literary taste. Mr. Pound has explained in characteristic grammar one of the disadvantages under which he has laboured :

Clamantis deserto, I find it very difficult to find an opponent. This I state without any vanity. It may be due to defects of style. Only from concurrends do I receive any real correction. Butchart, Angold, Jeffrey Mark, McNair Wilson help me to correct my deflections.

Being neither Butchart, Angold, Jeffrey Mark nor McNair Wilson, I have not expressed my own opinion of Mr. Pound, preferring to give quotations from which readers can judge for themselves. He complains of the ignorance shown in the British "serious press"—"Already in my young and ignorant years they considered me 'learned.'" I sympathise profoundly with Mr. Pound in this complaint, and I earnestly hope that he will not much longer have to suffer from being treated with so unjust a deference.

## THE DEVONSHIRE HOUSE SET

*The Grand Whiggery* is a better book than most of its sort, because the author has stuck to scissors and paste, avoiding flights of fancy. Mrs. Villiers, like the great ladies she describes, is rather individual in her use of grammar. What is more serious, while

she gives us no information that is new, she sometimes conceals or distorts the facts that we do know. In her preface she says of the Devonshire House set: "They loved and hated, as no Victorian could have loved or hated" (which seems to me nonsense); she goes on to declare that Lady Caroline Lamb was always faithful to her husband! She also seems uncertain whether Lady Bessborough was Granville's mistress—and indeed his daughter-in-law, who edited their correspondence, did her ineffective best by reckless bowdlerisation to conceal the fact. Her edition of *Lord Granville Leveson-Gower: Private Correspondence 1781-1821* is, despite its mutilations, one of the most enjoyable books of letters in English. If we could have a complete and scholarly edition, Lady Bessborough would obtain the reputation she deserves, as the nearest English equivalent of Mme de Sévigné.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Villiers's book tells the story of the Devonshire House circle lucidly, with some acute comments upon character. It makes a good guide-book to a fascinating country, where, for a privileged few, reigned *la vraie douceur de vivre*. The setting is sumptuous, Chatsworth with its pilasters and gilded glazing-bars, Palladian Chiswick, the romantic gloom of Hardwick, "black velvet furniture, casements grown over with ivy, and floating arras." Then there is the Continent: Lord Bristol with £25,000 a year from an Irish diocese which he rarely visits, buying marbles and sham Salvators in Rome; Sir William Hamilton at Naples excavating Pompeii, while his wife performs her Attitudes; Paris, best of all; up to the Revolution, and even then the Devonshire House set are all for revolutions (except in England) until the Jacobin massacres. The Napoleonic War makes Paris unattainable—that is one of many good reasons for objecting to it—Napoleon is a tyrant, of course, though the Hollands won't admit this, but at least he is preferable to the Bourbons. At home, party politics are absorbing, but continually disappointing: Pitt quarrels with Addington, Canning intrigues against Pitt, but the Foxites remain out of office until the Ministry of All the Talents—and even then the wretched "Doctor" holds a key position. (The devastation wrought by Party during the Napoleonic Wars is alarming to read of.) Yet Europe in arms did not gravely agitate Devonshire House. Indeed nothing disturbed the Duke's apathy, except an occasional impulse to beget a child or to correct a Latin quotation. And the Duchess, with Grey at her feet, was delighted that her darling friend, Lady Elizabeth Foster, should also be her husband's mistress—gambling debts and recurrent trouble with her eyes were her real anxieties. So the three lived together, while the

legitimate children shared their nursery with a hodge-podge—Lady Elizabeth's children by her husband, Lady Elizabeth's children by the Duke, the Duke's child by a previous liaison, and the Duchess's child by Grey. (Mrs. Villiers omits to tell us about the last of these.)

This was the Age of Sentiment. Rousseau posthumously triumphing over Voltaire dominated the *Zeitgeist*, and though a Lady Melbourne might model herself on Mme de Merteuil in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, it was fashionable to have more heart than head. But in the Devonshire House circle, and particularly in Georgiana's sister Henrietta, heart and head were exquisitely balanced. *Une âme bien née*, if ever there was one, she was married to the amiable Bessborough, a nobleman too much interested in collecting books and prints to notice society or politics. Inevitably Henrietta was caught up in her sister's world, and besieged by admirers: the Prince of Wales, Sheridan, a host of others, sighed in vain. For her health's sake she spent the winter of 1793 in Italy, and when Lord Granville Leveson-Gower came to Naples with Lord Holland, he found her there with Lady Webster, who was expecting a child. There were expeditions to see the antiquities, and two long love-affairs began. Lady Webster's child was born in Florence, and, she told her husband, buried there. But when two years later she eloped with Holland, a little girl joined the establishment. It came out that at Florence the Burial Service had been read over the coffin of a goat. Lady Webster had to surrender her child—and her vast fortune—to her middle-aged husband, but she obtained a divorce, a new husband who was an angel, and a resplendent career as the tyrannical hostess of Holland House. If most women refrained from visiting her, it did not matter—she preferred men.

Lady Bessborough was more feeling and less fortunate. For some while she resisted Granville: he was only twenty when they met, she twelve years older. But soon she was utterly in love: "Beamer" and Antinous were his nicknames, and he won a European reputation for good looks by his chesnut hair and almond-shaped bright blue eyes, "those eyes," Lady B. wrote, "where I have looked my life away." Her friends were not pleased: the irresistible, the so sensitive, Henrietta had thrown herself away on a stick, a prig, a fop—worst of all, a man who did not belong to their set. But his relations were far more angry: being stupid, they could draw on unlimited supplies of moral indignation, and Devonshire House was not only debauched but subversive! In fact, Lady Bessborough's advice to Granville was invariably good, she helped him politically, she lectured

him against gambling, she tried to marry him to Anne Beckford, the richest heiress in England, and she smiled on his marriage to her beloved Georgiana's child, Harriet Cavendish. Whether she remained his mistress right up to the marriage is, like so much about this relation, uncertain. The one thing certain is that she loved him regardlessly, continuously, and with touching unselfishness.

Lady Bessborough's later years were filled with anxieties. Having managed her own profound passion with exemplary adroitness and self-control, she had to watch her daughter advertising an infatuation, and turning herself into a public show. Caroline had inherited much of her mother's charm, none of her sense; and Caroline's child was an imbecile. The others of the younger generation were sane enough, but intolerantly respectable and *embourgeoisés*. Hartington, who had made such a rumpus when Caroline refused him, was now a recluse, caring for little except his gardens: the Devonshire House nurseries, once so miscellaneous, were silent. Harriet Granville wrote delicious letters, her wit surpassing her aunt's, but she was less sensitive, more stiff, already a Victorian, and after dinner the ageing Antinous would read to her from the Pentateuch. The brief essay in urbane licence had petered out; Lady Bessborough was only sixty when she died, but she had already become a survivor from a brighter age.

There had been black days, of course. Nelson, Pitt and Fox had died in the same twelve months (to-day there is at least no fear of our suffering such an ordeal as this) and our allies were monotonously defeated—Ulm, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland—so that England was left leaderless and confronting the enemy alone. But to be a Whig grandee, born like Lady Bessborough about the middle of the eighteenth century, was an enviable lot. The Devonshire House set enjoyed every privilege; they were highly cultivated, they formed a clan invulnerable to disapproval, they had freedom of brain and heart, they could even enjoy their scandalous wealth with a good conscience, since they maintained a militant opposition to a reactionary government. And reading about them we find ourselves present at one of those refreshing occasions in history when a fortunate group of men and women have contrived to combine sensibility with sense.

## LADY BESSBOROUGH

BEAUTIFUL and witty, sensible and warm-hearted, Lady Bessborough, like the so dissimilar Elizabeth Bennet and Anna Karenina, is a heroine who answers closely to man's dreams of what a woman should be. Every new scrap about her is welcome, like a letter or telephone-call from a woman one is fond of; and there is a touch of jealousy in the dislike we feel for Lord Granville. The present Lord Bessborough, provoked by the mistakes of fact and interpretation in recent books about his great-great-grandmother, is concerned chiefly to exhibit her as a dutiful daughter, an adoring sister, an affectionate mother and a dearly-loved wife.\* Of course, of course, one hastens to respond, we never doubted it: she was a paragon, a darling; and to be in her husband's shoes was the next best thing to being in Granville's.

Lord Bessborough thought so himself. A kind-hearted *cognoscente*, he had a lot to put up with: his wife was for years an invalid; she ran up debts; she had four children by another man. Yet he knew himself to be lucky: "I have no wish on earth but to make you comfortable and happy," he wrote thirteen years after their marriage, and he was broken by her death. The two chief witnesses on the other side are her niece, Harriet Cavendish, and Byron. To Harriet, Lady B. was a rackety harum-scarum, a friend of her detested step-mother, and the mistress, no less devoted for having been discarded, of her husband. To Byron she was "Lady Blarney," a gushing busybody, the champion of the pestilent Caroline. (Re-reading his letters to Lady Melbourne, I have been struck by his likeness to the incomparably caddish hero of Montherlant's tetralogy.) But these unfair judgments were not based merely on personal prejudice. Lady Bessborough was always fairly glowing and brimming with emotion. Going to church was hardly less enjoyable than going to Granville—both experiences excited the most pleasing sentiments of fervour and gratitude. Her mother and her niece, belonging to different periods, were unable to understand this; and to Byron, for similar reasons, she seemed simply a fraud. She must be seen in historical perspective, a Woman of Feeling, produced by the Age of Rousseau, Greuze, and Mackenzie.

The book can be warmly recommended, but only to those already familiar with the personages. It contains unpublished

\* *Lady Bessborough and Her Family Circle*. Edited by the Earl of Bessborough in collaboration with A. Aspinall.

letters from Lady Bessborough, her mother, her husband, her three children, and her nephew, Hartington. (There is, incidentally, a sensitive letter from the Regent that makes one understand why he could be called the First Gentleman of Europe.) The result is to display the characters in relation to one another from a variety of angles, as in the amusing letters about the Duke's marriage with Lady Elizabeth. We first meet the eleven-year-old Henrietta on a tour with her parents, meeting the Prince de Ligne and Mme du Deffand, and greedily recording in her diary "the most shocking sights," gibbets and charnel-houses—she is already all a-quiver with sensibility. At the age of nineteen she married Duncannon, though there were many, she confessed, whose manners and conversation she liked better :

I have a better chance of being reasonably happy with him than with most people I know. But there are some things which frighten me sadly, he is so grave & I am so giddy, I do not deceive myself about my own faults, I know I have thousands, I perceive it more & more every day, and to plunge into the world with such a head as mine, I hope the heart is not bad, but indeed I sometimes almost doubt that, but I will not plague you any more with my Jeremiades for I am very low.

In due course her mother had reason to worry. In 1786, she wrote : " If you could know (but God forbid you ever should) what I have suffered, my dearest Harriet, about you and your sister for years past." I suspect there was more than gambling behind this groan, but we still know nothing of Lady Bessborough's indiscretions before she met Granville. A worthy woman, with all the bourgeois and Victorian virtues, who visited the poor and made nets to save her currants from the birds, what had Lady Spencer done to deserve such fascinating, such desperate, daughters as Lady B. and the Duchess of Devonshire ? Hopefully she would report a " very good sermon from the vicar against the danger of bad connections and encouraging vice." It was no use. " Who knows," she writes, " if I had had more firmness, how much it might have operated upon your dear sister's conduct & your own, & what bitter regrets it might have saved us all." There was worse to come, for she lived to see her granddaughter Caroline a public scandal. The old lady may not be likeable, but her affection always prevailed over her disapproval. And here is an odd new fact about her. She lent money to the Queen of Naples and the disreputable Mme Talleyrand—and dunned them, of course with no success. Lady Spencer, it appears, qualified devoutness with snobbery.

Lady Bessborough must have been delightful as a mother.



When she is abroad for her health (she seems for years to have been consumptive) her sons at Harrow, which sounds a nice, soft school, write to her about their pleasure in lead soldiers, hoops and peg-tops. She answers lovingly with descriptions and little drawings of foreign scenes in which their father helps. Then Caroline begins to grow up, a clever, lively girl, who promises to be as delicious as her mother. She gets herself engaged to William Lamb, and Lady Bessborough loathes his mother, Lady Melbourne, whom she justly considers hard and ambitious. (The Melbournes, moreover, were *parvenus*, from outside the great Whig cousinage.) No matter, Caroline is happy; and "My darling Love," Lady Bessborough writes, "Your letter makes me cry & then laugh at myself for crying. The truth is we are two simpletons, & unlike what mother and daughter ought to be." At first everything goes swimmingly. Caroline describes to her grandmother how she is reading Hume, the Bible, and Newton on the Prophecies. She asks her mother to write for her a list of "The principal dates and events, wars, risings, etc., from Romulus till the time of Constantine the Great." But in her fanciful letters to her cousin Hartington, who adored her, another Caroline emerges. In one of these she asks about her cousin Hary-o's wedding to Granville, from which she had been mysteriously excluded. "Send me an account of the ceremony, no soul writes me word what happened, who was affected, how Ld. G. behaved, if Harriot was unhappy, how she was drest, what she wore. . . . Was mama at the ceremony?" Is the answer, one wonders, in the muniment room at Chatsworth, for a hundred and thirty years later we are just as inquisitive as Caroline was about this delicate occasion. Her letter is signed "Sophia Heathcote," others are signed "Molly Peacock," "William Rufus-Rex" and "Syrop of Elderob." Often she breaks into doggerel—"I've got a gnac at rhyming"—and Selina Trimmer, who so successfully caught Mrs. Woolf's attention, often bobs up:

The cowslip & the lemon pale  
with Selly's cheek might vie,  
But never maid that was not frail  
had such a jet black eye.

A charming gift for nonsense, one might think. Indeed, nobody now seems to recognise quite how bewitching Caroline could be; and her letters would alone make this a valuable book. But there is madness in them, the unexplained madness that finally overwhelmed Caroline and was transmitted to her son. She had much of her mother's goodness as well as her charm.

The Devonshire House set had the luck to live in an interglacial period. How to-day can we expect young women to compare in wit, wisdom and elegant generosity with Lady Bessborough? We have been reduced to the cultivation of a single virtue, the bleak fortitude necessary for survival. These personages, with all their faults, remain exemplary by their complete self-realisation. Lacking the rare genius of the artist or the saint, they show what luxuriant flowers the human spirit can put forth in a balmy climate. They are, moreover, as real to us as the characters in Saint-Simon, Tolstoy or Proust. Thus we are grateful for every new and enlightening detail, as we should be for a newly-discovered passage from our favourite novelist. And when we seek their company, we escape, indeed, but we escape from a nightmare or a bedlam, into the daylight of a handsome and smiling landscape.

## RANDALL CANTUAR

THE length of this book\* is likely to alarm the ordinary reader, but in its well-arranged mass of information a writer with Lytton Strachey's gifts would find the material for a fascinating portrait. The indiscreet candour of Purcell's *Manning* is, of course, not to be expected from Dr. Bell, who was Chaplain to the Archbishop. But he has done his work very thoroughly, and the quotations he uses as chapter-headings betray an erudite wit to which he too rarely give play in the text.

Those who do not appreciate the particular flavour of ecclesiastical biography will probably turn straight to the chapters dealing with the Parliament Act. Dr. Bell throws some doubt upon the assumption made in the *Life of Lord Oxford* that King Edward had given Mr. Asquith to understand that he would make Peers if the Lords rejected the Bill after another election. Also the Archbishop thought that undue pressure had been brought on King George to give his hypothetical consent before the election took place. At the same time he agreed that when the country had again spoken this consent must be given—

\* *Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury.* By G. K. A. Bell, Bishop of Chichester.

though he wished the King to "take the country into his confidence" about his difficulties. The distinction is a nice one; and one does not see how Mr. Asquith could possibly have appealed once more to the electors without the certainty that this time their decision would be effective. Indeed, pressure can hardly be called undue when it was so entirely in the true interest of the Crown. If the King had not consented, the Throne might not be what it is to-day. The Archbishop voted for the Bill, and it is most probable that his example was decisive. This was not the least of his services to this country.

A surprising statement is that Balfour and Hardinge had both approved highly of the Lansdowne letter before it appeared. (It is difficult to reconcile this with a letter from Balfour printed in Lord Newton's *Life of Lord Lansdowne*.) When the storm of fury broke out against Lord Lansdowne, the Archbishop wrote in his diary: "How Balfour and Hardinge can now rest quiet, under the accusations brought against Lansdowne, amazes me." He approved of the letter himself, but he was similarly careful not to publish the fact. And this brings us to what makes the *Life* a book of such absorbing interest, the particular character and talents which it reveals.

Randall Davidson was born in the Lowlands in 1848, and baptised by a Presbyterian Minister. He was educated at Harrow and Oxford, and after three years in a curacy became Chaplain to Tait, the Archbishop of Canterbury. He at once made himself unobtrusively invaluable, and the following year he married a daughter of the Archbishop. But this was no ordinary virtuous apprentice; when his father-in-law died, he wrote to the Queen a letter from which it appeared that the Archbishop's last hours had been largely occupied with thoughts of her Majesty. She was "deeply touched" by his "beautiful account"—it was indeed worthy of Talleyrand—and she summoned him to her presence. "Was seldom more struck," she recorded in her diary, "than I have been by his personality." And within a month he was given a cipher with which to communicate his views to the Queen's Private Secretary. A very wise young man.

Six months later the Dean of Windsor most considerably died, and Mr. Davidson with "his great knowledge of *Society* and of the Clergy generally and his great charm of manner" (the italics are the Queen's) was appointed by her to this key position near her person. Here he continued to conduct himself with exemplary skill. He never dwindled into a mere courtier. (The sirens dangerous to him, as Scott Holland pointed out, resided not in Windsor Castle, but in the Athenaeum.) He had the courage to

incur the Queen's displeasure by dissuading her from publishing a third volume of *Leaves from a Journal of our Life in the Highlands*—a wise courage, for which, later, she respected him. But when there was talk by Lord Salisbury of his being appointed to the See of Durham, the Dean did not show quite enough alacrity in turning down the suggestion. And "the Queen wonders," she wrote to Sir Henry Ponsonby, "if the Dean is at all an ambitious man." He retrieved his mistake, which was due, one suspects, not to ambition, but to the strain entailed by his delicate position. He would, for instance, be commanded to refer in his sermon to the death of John Brown—"A very difficult task," he noted in his diary, "but it must be done." However, he had become the *Eminence grise* of the Church of England, and when Tait died, it was Dean Davidson who was most responsible for the appointment of Benson: he continued as long as Benson lived to be the power behind the Primatial throne. At last the Queen allowed him to desert Windsor for the Bishopric of Rochester, where he was unhappy and ill. Offered promotion to Winchester, he displayed the hesitation expected of ecclesiastics in such circumstances, but his health fortunately obliged him to accept the offer of a more salubrious See. "In these circumstances my right course has seemed no longer doubtful."

Ensnared in the splendours of Farnham Castle he felt himself obliged to refuse a licence to the ritualistic Father Dolling, thus ending a career in the Portsmouth slums which was one of the wonders of the age. The Bishop's Oxford education had not given him any sympathy with Anglo-Catholicism; if he was not quite so Erastian as his father-in-law, he was almost as good a Lutheran as the Queen. And it is amusing to see in his *Life of Tait*, published in her lifetime, how tactfully he underestimates the foolishness of the Public Worship Regulation Act, which was the result, as Disraeli said, of her "personal will." It does not appear from Dr. Bell's book that Davidson ever interfered with the illegalities committed by extreme Low Churchmen, severe as he was on those of the Ritualists. And in matters of doctrine he was more indulgent to those who believed too little than to those who believed too much.

In 1896 Archbishop Benson died, and Lord Salisbury wished to offer the succession to Davidson. But the Queen, too kind, rejected the proposal as dangerous to his health. Temple was appointed, and for six years Davidson had the painful experience of not being the chief adviser of the Primate. In January, 1903, however, unfailing sagacity had its reward: Canterbury was his.

Politically he was much more progressive than most of the

Bishops' Bench. As early as 1893 he had been the only bishop whom Liberals like Scott Holland and Gore could find to support the workman's right to a living wage. He also voted in favour of the Licensing and Old Age Pensions Bills. During the war he repeatedly and courageously spoke against reprisals, when pious Evangelicals like Joynson-Hicks were shouting "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." He opposed the execution of Casement; and he tried to prevent the harrying of conscientious objectors. He disapproved of the khaki election of 1918 and of the terms of the Versailles Treaty, but on neither occasion did he feel obliged to make his disapproval public, nor apparently did he speak against the continuance of the Blockade. On the other hand his appeal for peace during the General Strike was courageous, Christian and statesmanlike; and Sir John Reith's refusal to broadcast it was, to put it mildly, a mistake, though the reasons he gave for it were of course high-minded. The truth is, I fancy, that Davidson regarded himself as a democratic statesman rather than as a prelate invested with authority from on high; he thought it the business of the Primate rather to represent than to direct his flock. The logic was far from him which made Newman protest that it was better for the whole human race to perish in anguish than that one venial sin should be committed. His way of thinking, in fact, was that of a good layman.

In ecclesiastical matters his statesmanship was most remarkable. Again and again he steered the Church of England through situations that threatened her disruption. He never rashly committed himself to a principle. Thus he greatly disapproved of the remarriage of innocent parties to a divorce and refused himself to marry them, but he would not refuse them Communion. Whether such marriages were or were not sinful remained obscure. Similarly, Nonconformists must not be corporately invited to Communion, but if they chose to come, they must be welcomed. It was all quite illogical and very skilful. When Bishop Barnes made the theologically ignorant, not to say vulgar and puerile, remark that the doctrine of the Real Presence could be disproved by experiment, the Archbishop administered in public a most gentlemanly rebuke. But he could never understand why many good Christians should continue to be preoccupied with niceties of sacramental dogma when the world was in such a disturbed state. Unfortunately for his policy, the war proved the attractiveness and practical effectiveness of Anglo-Catholic beliefs. Benediction, Confession, Requiem Masses, were practices that worked and were wanted—all of them things which the majority of non-churchgoers, and the Archbishop, intensely disliked. And so the

Revised Prayer Book was drawn up to define the limits of Anglican comprehensiveness. The intended and most important effect of this would have been to outlaw the Anglo-Catholics, and no one else would have been seriously inconvenienced. But by a curious irony it was rejected in an outburst of Protestant bigotry by the House of Commons. The Archbishop for the first time had entirely failed as a diplomatist. In the following month he resigned the Primacy.

When Mr. Ramsay MacDonald became Prime Minister for the first time, the Archbishop wrote to him in terms of most touching sympathy about the *Life* of Mrs. MacDonald which he had just been reading. The hand which had written to the Queen about Archbishop Tait forty-two years previously had not lost its cunning. But it must not be supposed for a moment that he was insincere. It was just that he knew how to get the best, in every sense of the word, out of the people with whom he had to deal. He was a very wise old man, as he had been a very wise young man—indeed “the very wisest man in all England,” according to Bishop Gore, who differed from him profoundly, but was “overwhelmed by the sense of his personal goodness, his exceedingly genuine humility, and the total absence of spite or uncharitableness or injustice in his character.” The Archbishop remarked of himself: “I should say that I was a funny old fellow of quite mediocre second-rate gifts and a certain amount of common sense, but that I had tried to do my best.” Here his humility was excessive. If he had remained a layman, he would have been Prime Minister. If he had been an Italian, he would have been Pope. He was very cautious, he always took thought for the morrow, he did not consider the lilies of the field. He was too great a politician to be a great saint. One is fascinated by the canny and uncanny skill with which he managed his own life and that of his Church: but if he obeyed his Lord’s injunction to be as wise as a serpent, he also succeeded in retaining a charitable heart. If he had shown more courage he would have been a better man, but a worse Archbishop. The loss was his.

## CHARLES KINGSLEY

*Charles Kingsley, 1819-1875*, by Margaret Farrand Thorp is an American biography of unusual merit. It has the appearance of being a thesis, but the author’s scholarship never degenerates

into pedantry or dullness. Nor, on the other hand, has she been deluded by her own interest in the subject into investing Kingsley with greater virtues than he possessed. "Most of the great literary figures of the nineteenth century," she says on her first page, "were rebels against or thinkers in advance of their time. Kingsley's influence was due in large part to his not being a thinker at all." I have been dipping into one after the other of his novels, and could not read through any of them. This is no doubt partly my own fault. (I have even attempted Henry Kingsley's *Ravenshoe*, which good judges consider superior to any of his brother's books; it is much more lively, but so childishly melodramatic that I gave up three-quarters of the way through.) Mrs. Charles Kingsley's *Life* of her husband has all the faults of the worst Victorian biographies, and consists chiefly of very uninteresting letters. But Kingsley is well worth the study, because no one was more eminently Victorian. Almost everyone who knew him liked him: he was high-spirited as well as high-minded; from sixty years distance, however, I find it difficult not to dislike him. His friend Hughes, the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, describes him as:

A great full-grown Newfoundland yearling dog out for an airing, plunging in and out of the water, and rushing against and shaking himself over ladies' silks and velvets, dandies' polished boots, or schoolboys' rough jackets.

This affectionate portrait carries conviction.

Kingsley is kindly remembered because he was a "Christian Socialist" and a supporter of Darwin. He bravely called himself a Chartist (when Chartism was most feared and hated), and was temporarily inhibited for preaching a sermon reported to be subversive. The disgust with the condition of the urban and agricultural proletariat expressed in *Yeast* and *Alton Locke* and *Parson Lot's Letters* was profound. But Kingsley was never a Socialist, and became increasingly a Tory. "A true democracy such as you and I should wish to see is impossible without a Church and a Queen, and, as I believe, without a gentry." He feared that, if the House of Lords were abolished, the Government would "tend to tax the rich for the sake of the poor, with very ugly results to civilisation." His political faith could fairly be described as Disraelian. His Darwinism was more whole-hearted than his Radicalism. "Darwin is conquering everywhere," he writes, "and rushing in like a flood by the mere force of truth and fact." The readiness with which he accepted the new geological and biological theories made him a great comfort to a

public distressed by the apparent antagonism between Science and Religion. It was a relief also to learn from him that the adjective "eternal" did not, when applied to punishment, signify "endless." There was, rightly, no doubt of the sincerity of Kingsley's religion; nor did the public perceive that he was hopelessly muddle-headed. He gaily put forward his peculiar view of Christianity as if it were not a paradox but a truism. He believed in Nature, manly courage, proper pride, physical exercise, cleanliness, the ennobling influence of women—all respectable things to believe in, but Kingsley really persuaded himself that these were the beliefs inculcated in the Christian Revelation. The asceticism that has been important in Christianity from its origin he dismissed with a favourite term of abuse as "Manichæan." The most insular of men, he disliked and despised Catholics, Dissenters, Tractarians, Evangelicals, the Irish, the French, and almost all foreigners. There was one exception. "Really," he wrote, "this Germany is a wonderful country—though its population are not members of the Church of England." He was enchanted with Sadowa, and said of the Prussian defeat of the French, "it will work good for generations to come." But then he had always been a firm believer in the ennobling influence of war:

A general war might, amid all its inevitable horrors, sweep away at once the dyspeptic unbelief, the insincere bigotry, the effeminate frivolity which now paralyses our poetry as much as it does our action, and strike from England's heart a lightning flash of noble deeds, a thunder peal of noble song.

A few months after writing this, he saw the outbreak of the Crimean War, and saw it with such pleasure that he started writing *Westward Ho!* to encourage the military spirit. "War in those days," some champion of Kingsley may urge, "was very different. Only professional soldiers and sailors engaged in it." This is true (though only of England). But then, why should war be expected to have such a tonic effect upon non-combatants? Was reading in the newspapers about the sufferings of others supposed to be good for the character? Kingsley's personal courage was proved by his behaviour during the cholera epidemic, but it is difficult to contemplate without dismay his thirst for vicarious bloodshed.

Kingsley's life seems to have been a happy one—as lives go. He loved his wife, and Nature, with an enviable gusto. He was a most popular writer and preacher, he was Chaplain to Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales. He supposed that the world was progressing, and he believed himself to be in the



vanguard of progress. Most men, as they grow old, see the decay of their own powers reflected in their environment, and are convinced that the country is going to the dogs because they are themselves going to the grave. But Kingsley believed that the Crimean War had redeemed the age. He had always perceived and preached the high moral importance of hygiene, and the horrors of the Crimean War did convert public opinion to the importance of hygiene, through the agency of Miss Nightingale. He lived to see the increase of cleanliness if not of godliness. But in one respect he was conspicuously unfortunate : he made a baseless charge against Newman. And *The Quarterly Review* justly prophesied that Kingsley "would go down to history as the fly in the clear amber of his antagonist's apology." Newman's answer, indeed, was so devastating that some people felt sorry for Kingsley : an impulsive sympathy with the man who was down made them forget that no one ever more entirely deserved to be downed. And because Newman's controversial skill was so immeasurably superior to his opponent's, they fancied that there was more to be said for Kingsley than Kingsley succeeded in saying. But if one studies the controversy from its beginning, it becomes clear, I think, that Kingsley collapsed because he had not a leg to stand on. His moral obtuseness was no greater than his intellectual feebleness. In fact the two qualities were inextricably connected. He behaved like a cad because he thought like a fool. Miss Thorp's book includes a hitherto unpublished letter written by Kingsley after the appearance of the *Apologia*. "I have determined to take no notice," he says, "of Dr. Newman's apology." This at least was wise. But he continues :

I cannot trust—I can only smile at—the autobiography of a man who (believing with Newman's light, learning and genius) ends in believing that he believes in the Infallibility of the Church, and in the Immaculate Conception. If I am to bandy words, it must be with sane persons.

Newman must be a liar, because he cannot really believe what he says he believes. And Newman must be a madman, because he does believe what he says he believes. Kingsley makes the two mutually contradictory charges in consecutive sentences. The infidel observer might also enquire why it was a greater sign of madness in Newman to believe in the Immaculate Conception than in Kingsley to believe in the Virgin Birth. The former belief at least does not involve the suspension of any physical law. If we shared Kingsley's view that persons who

believe what we find incredible must be mad, we should most of us be forced to think he was mad himself. A simpler and more probable view is that he was merely unimaginative to the point of stupidity.

Kingsley never tired of denouncing the duplicity and intellectual dishonesty of those with whom he disagreed; and doubtless he thought of himself as eminently straightforward. Yet his historical writings show a most culpable blindness to evidence. In his essay on Walter Raleigh, for instance, he out-Froudes Froude in the absurdity of partisanship. Queen Elizabeth is a saint, and Charles I, who was so foolish as to die a martyr rather than abjure the Church of which Kingsley was a minister, is stigmatised as a "deliberate suicide." This attitude may be excused as the fruit of what theologians call "invincible ignorance." But it would require an ingenuity greater than that of the Jesuit casuists whom he airily denounced, to reconcile Kingsley's religious opinions with the doctrines proclaimed in the Anglican Articles and Liturgy. In his historical writings he persistently uses the word "Popish" to mean "untruthful, bigoted and morally debased," until at last he drives the exasperated reader into thinking of a "Popish" historian, who in truthfulness, impartiality and moral elevation compares with him as day with night. But it is absurd to include in the same sentence the names of Kingsley and of Lord Acton. Kingsley's weak intellect was always the slave of his powerful emotions; and he took the violence of his feelings as a proof of their rightness. He approached the arts in a similar spirit. George Eliot is dismissed as "the infidel *esprit fort* who is now G. H. Lewes's concubine." The Italian Primitives are Manichaean; the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century playwrights, except Shakespeare and occasionally Ben Jonson, are utterly vile; and

Let the poets of the new school consider carefully Wolfe's *Sir John Moore*, Campbell's *Hohenlinden*, *Mariners of England* and *Rule Britannia*, Hood's *Song of the Shirt* and *Bridge of Sighs*, and then ask themselves as men who would be poets, was it not better to have written any one of those glorious lyrics than all which John Keats has left behind him; and let them be sure that, howsoever they may answer the question to themselves, the sound heart of the English people has already made its choice.

One has to take Kingsley as a whole—a compound of comical prejudices and generous enthusiasms. He was self-opinionated beyond what is forgivable except in the uneducated. But it is impossible to separate his Philistinism and his insularity from his

splendid indignation against those who neglected so grossly the public health. A Newfoundland dog, which has been bathing, shakes itself indifferently upon the just and the unjust.

## TWO GERMANS

FRAU STRAUCH was a passionate young woman, who married a respectable schoolmaster much older than herself.\* "I thought it would be splendid to make him young again, and happy." He had similar plans for reforming her into a good *Hausfrau*; and both schemes failed. Then she met Dr. Friedrich Ritter, a doctor who, like many of his compatriots, was well on the track of the Secret of the Universe. He succeeded in being a disciple both of Nietzsche and Lao-Tse; and he was separated from his wife. Frau Strauch at once recognised her destiny. The doctor had an answer for every difficulty:

One day I hesitantly confessed to Dr. Ritter that I could never have a child, but he consoled me, saying: "Children are an extension of the personal into world matter, a postponement of personal redemption and of the fulfilment of the ultimate duty laid upon every person to perfect himself." Fatherhood, he said, was one of the ordinary human joys which he had long since renounced. I recognised that I, still bound to Earth, must overcome and sublimate the Ego, ever dominant in woman.

For two years Frau Strauch hung wearily between her husband and her lover.

In my own home I was still obliged to play the model *Hausfrau*, appearing with my husband at social functions wearing evening dress and high-heeled shoes. With Frederick I was an entirely different being, even in appearance. . . . Of all the evil inventions of modern costume, Frederick disliked most the civilised shoe. He had a different idea of proper human footwear, and designed for us both shoes of soft leather without heels, sewn to the shape of the feet. We often wore these when we went for walks together.

Dr. Ritter wanted to escape from civilisation and live in solitude upon an island, and "it was my conviction that Dr. Ritter's experiment as a way of life would lack nobility without a woman." So they began collecting stores:

\* *Satan Came to Eden.* By Dora Strauch.

When I had suggested to Frederick that we should take morphia and a syringe, he had become quite furious, insisting that among the things our future life would teach us was the overcoming of pain by the power of the will. When, later on, he suggested taking a gun, it was my turn to object, insisting that to do so would be to deny our principle of living at peace with the animal creation.

They took table equipment for only one person, and only one pillow. Another preparation was not omitted.

For years he had been carrying out a system of eating which required an extensive mastication of each mouthful. The result of this was that he had worn his teeth to stubs, and it had come to the point when he must have them crowned, if they were to be of any further use to him. He preferred to have them all removed, especially as he had a scientific desire to find out whether gums might be so far toughened as to become a substitute for teeth in chewing.

Dr. Ritter's wife was installed as housekeeper to Frau Strauch's husband—a neat arrangement which for some reason did not prove successful, and the philosophic pair took ship to the Galapagos—"he for God only, she for God in him."

The island on which they settled had little water, was covered with boulders, lava which tore the feet, trees and shrubs of so hard a wood that it defied even dynamite. The insect life was appalling. In the dry weather the sand-fleas poisoned Frau Strauch's feet by nesting in them.

Frederick's medical skill could give me some relief, but was of little real use, failing means of protecting us from invasion. But he applied another treatment, one which had proved itself of value often in my case, as perhaps in others. He told me that I could, if I had sufficient will, erect so strong a defence-psychology around my feet that through sheer intensity of consciousness I could be warned when any alien thing approached them.

This worked well, but when the rains came the settlers were overwhelmed with cockroaches and beetles, a dozen kinds of caterpillars, plant-lice, and ants. "They came in legions and where they touched they stung." Nothing was safe from them, and the efficacy of "defence-psychology" was apparently limited. Frau Strauch found consolation in pet animals and in flowers, and then "Frederick would notice my divided attention, and resent it bitterly, for to him, with his unswerving attachment to the great purpose with which we had both come to Floreana, my apparently incurable attachment to worldly things was a source of grief and disappointment. 'Your affection for all these wild creatures

here, and for your plants and chickens, is no more or less than a flattering and cherishing of the animal in yourself.' ”

Then there was the Indian servant who insisted on shooting animals :

One misery was hardly overcome before another, and a worse, arrived. Our vegetarian régime had created in both Frederick and me an organic antagonism towards meat, but now Frederick began to force us to become carnivorous. He said that since we were compelled not only to suffer but also to collaborate in the killing of animals, we were also morally obliged to put the prey to its fullest uses. The physical result of this, no doubt, high moral point of view, was that we were both distressed by a general feeling of acute discomfort, that painful and unsightly sores came out upon our bodies and that my finger-tips began to fester underneath the nails. This condition robbed us of so much energy and strength, of which our normal stock was nothing like enough for the exhausting labour of the island, that I pleaded hard with Frederick to abandon logic and the ethics of slaughter for the sake of our health. But I besought in vain.

Into this “ Eden ” Satan came in the form of a bogus Baroness with two lovers. But the persecution which she inflicted on the two idealists seems slight in comparison with the ordeals they imposed upon themselves. At last one of the lovers murdered the Baroness and his rival, himself dying of thirst soon afterwards on a barren island not far away. But this melodrama is written mostly from conjecture, and without the details which would make it interesting. Frau Strauch's book is a fascinating record, written with an admirable directness, and the reader is left with quite affectionate feelings for the authoress. How, we wonder, does she adapt herself to the hardships and follies, different in kind but not in degree, of Nazi Germany? Her story can be recommended to the more indiscriminating disciples of D. H. Lawrence. Having read it, one doesn't know whether to marvel more at indomitable human courage or at incurable human silliness.

## GENERAL BOULANGER

BOULANGER is now hardly even a name, I suspect, to most English readers. But fifty-four years ago it seemed likely that this general would become dictator of France. The story is worth retelling, because it suggests a topical parallel. I am not referring

to Pétain : he is indeed a general who seized autocratic power, but in opposite circumstances. Whereas he represented the acceptance of defeat, Boulanger incarnated the hope of victory. He now appears in history as a Hitler who failed.

The France of 1886 resembled in many ways the Germany of 1933. It was fifteen years since a humiliating defeat. The republican régime installed by that defeat was working badly, and becoming increasingly unpopular. National feelings were enfevered. Enough of debates, enough of corruption, enough of a delusive liberalism, enough of the Jews. Eyes turned to the lost provinces, and the discontented were pinning their hopes to a Man. But more important than all these similarities are two differences. Boulanger, it turned out, had neither the courage nor the political skill of Hitler ; and the French cared profoundly, as the Germans have never cared, for liberty.

In April, 1885, the French learnt that the new Minister of War was a General Boulanger. Little was known of him. The son of an attorney who had incurred the censure of his profession, Ernest Boulanger—he later preferred to be known as Georges—was born in 1837. He became a professional soldier, was wounded in Algeria, in the Italian campaign at Magenta, again in Indo-China, and in the Franco-Prussian war. His appointment to the War Office was a sop to the Radical leader, Clemenceau. He rapidly executed a number of reforms that increased the comfort of the soldiers and the glamour of the army. The popularity thus earned was further fostered by a sedulous pursuit of publicity. He lacked all elevation of heart or mind, but vulgarity can be a help to the ambitious. With his tanned skin, reddish beard and blue eyes, he cut a fine figure on his black horse (which only a few experts noticed was not a thoroughbred). In July, 1885, he dismissed from the Army the Duc d'Aumale, uncle to the Royalist Pretender : and the next day he received an ovation at a review in the Bois. The public fancy was caught by a music-hall song with the refrain "Moi j'faisais qu'admirer Not' brav' Général Boulanger," and rather to his surprise he found himself a popular hero. Monsieur Thiers was dead, so was Gambetta ; the position of chief was vacant.

In April, 1887, a frontier incident provoked a war-scare ; and Boulanger, by a rash speech, won the reputation, quite undeserved, of having made Bismarck retreat. In May the government fell ; Rouvier formed a new Cabinet without Boulanger, and consigned him to an unimportant command in the Auvergne. A mob accompanied him to the station, enthusiasts lay on the rails to prevent the train taking him away, and shouts

of "A l'Elysée" invited him to effect a *coup d'état*. He refused the invitation, but his photograph was now used to embellish every type of article: he was even the King of Hearts on playing cards. Clemenceau, jealous or justly apprehensive, turned to attack him. Hitherto Boulanger had represented two ideas—radicalism and anti-Germanism (le Général Revanche). But Royalists and Bonapartists had joined with democrats in these Paris manifestations, and the prestige of the Republic was falling. It had survived only because its opponents had been divided, unfortunate, and unwise. Chambord had refused the throne rather than accept the tricolor. But now Chambord was dead, and the Prince Imperial had been killed in Zululand, so that the Orleanist Comte de Paris rallied the support of many Bonapartists as well as of almost all the Royalists. Boulanger became a focus of every discontent. The Radicals who wanted the abolition of the Senate still thought him their man. He had already in secret visited Prince Napoleon in Switzerland, but the Empress Eugénie, who had the money, would not give her support. In the spring of 1888, however, he made a pact with the Royalists. Henceforward Boulanger was caught in a tangle of deceit. While calling his followers "le parti républicain nationaliste," he promised each section of them what they desired. (But to his great credit, he refused firmly any truck with the anti-Semitism then widely epidemic, as so often in unstable societies, among knaves and fools.) The chauvinist Republicans Déroulède and Rochefort were his noisiest supporters, but Boulanger needed what the Left could not provide—money. For he now engaged upon an electoral campaign, standing for each seat that became vacant so as to be summoned to power by a gradual plebiscite.

President Grévy had been obliged to resign by a scandal involving his son-in-law, and the parliamentary régime was further weakened. Boulanger was elected successively in the departments of the Dordogne and the Nord. The Duchesse d'Uzès offered the Comte de Paris three million francs with which to back Boulanger, and the Pretender grudgingly accepted. A duel in which he was wounded by a civilian gave Boulanger's enemies a laugh, but did not affect his popularity. With the money and the votes of the Royalists he won in August three more elections. Clemenceau had founded the "Ligue des droits de l'homme," republican and anti-clerical, and epitomised one permanent advantage of democracy in the phrase: "Gloire aux pays où l'on discute et honte aux pays où l'on ne parle pas."

For Boulanger, the situation looked highly promising. Though the new President, Sadi Carnot, unlike Hindenburg, was loyal

to the Republic, he was a nonentity who seemed to typify its feebleness. Nor were any of the ministers either popular or conspicuous for ability and determination. Clemenceau was not in office; the names of Goblet, Floquet and Constans—though the last, it turned out, possessed tactical acumen—have left no great mark in French history. The Republic itself had no glamour; an ill-framed constitution seemed to proclaim it a mere interlude or make-shift. The Church, the professions—particularly the Army—and a majority of the great financiers disliked the Republican idea; and those to whom the idea appealed were, especially in the towns, alienated from the actual Republic, which pursued neither of the Jacobin objectives, equality and patriotic glory.

So far, then, Boulanger's situation has many similarities with that of Hitler before 1933: the young saw in him an ideal, the rich thought they had found in him a tool. "What typifies and sets in action popular heroes is not so much their own will as the image that the populace forms of them." This was the verdict a few years later of the disillusioned Barrès, whose *L'appel au soldat* provides a brilliant eye-witness account of the Boulangiste movement. (The General, who now seems as absurd as Hitler did when he first broke upon the scene, was keenly supported by both Barrès and Anatole France, the two most brilliant young writers of the time.) But the real Boulanger corresponded too little to the popular image. He had no understanding of his situation—nothing indeed but a geniality of manner and a brainless confidence in his star. He was moreover the least adventurous of adventurers.

On January 27, 1889, in an election for the Paris constituency of Clignancourt he defeated the government candidate by an immense majority. The streets were packed with his supporters, again crying "A l'Elysée." From a restaurant in the Place de la Madeleine, Boulanger looked out upon the delirious mob. "The Empire died of its origins," he declared—he had been brought up in horror of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*. "But it lasted for eighteen years!" one of his supporters answered. "In six months I can get power by constitutional methods," he decided, and slipped home to bed. Here a word must be placed about Marguerite Vicomtesse de Bonnemains. Boulanger is described as having in his eyes "a veiled look" that reminded people of Napoleon III, and like Napoleon III he was devoted to the pleasures of the alcove. After many adventures he was during the critical years passionately in love with Marguerite de Bonnemains. There are stories that she was an agent of the Govern-



ment or even of Bismarck, but it is doubtful whether she ever tried to influence her lover. What is certain is that she did influence him in the sense that he would not risk being separated from her. And on April 1 he fled from France. The Government had arranged for rumours to reach him of his imminent arrest; and the threat, which they might not have dared to execute, sufficed. Unable to face the possibility of solitude in a cell, Boulanger escaped with Mme de Bonnemains to the cosiness of a Brussels hotel. No preparations had been made to counter a *coup*, but the Republic was saved.

Boulanger moved to London, where he took a furnished house in Portland Place and was introduced by Lord Randolph Churchill to the Prince of Wales. His place, in hearts and headlines, was usurped by the newly completed Eiffel Tower—already he had shrunk into a figure of fun. The September elections on which he had been counting were disastrous: only 44 Boulangistes and 140 Royalists were elected against 366 Republicans. The General's money gave out—the Duchesse d'Uzès was not interested in supporting a poltroon—and he left London for Jersey. His only chance, Déroulède told him, was to come to Paris and risk arrest: "*Paraître ou disparaître.*" Boulanger refused. "You are known to have military courage," said Déroulède, "but civilian courage you lack." Ignominy was added to defeat, for a supporter betrayed the whole squalid story of Boulanger's dealings with the Royalists and Bonapartists. The General and his mistress drifted to Brussels, where in July, 1891, she died. In September he shot himself on her grave. His will directed that only the name "Georges" should appear on his tombstone, and the words: "How was I able to live for two and a half months without you?" One of his most ardent supporters provided a more permanent epitaph: "He promised to be a Caesar, he lived a Catiline, and he died a Romeo."

Boulangisme divided France across all party lines: authoritarians and chauvinists, alike of the Left and the Right, thought they had found in him their man. (I say "chauvinists" rather than "patriots" because it was too early for *la revanche*; if Boulanger had gained power, Bismarck would have inflicted a certain defeat upon a France without an ally.) It is ironical that in the following year the Panama scandal exposed the worst weakness of the régime: two financiers of German origin, Baron de Reinach and Cornelius Herz, had corrupted over a hundred deputies. If the exposure had happened earlier, Boulanger must have succeeded. Now the victory over Boulangisme had so strengthened the Republic that it survived this malady

and the consequent Dreyfus affair ; and in due course recovered the lost provinces.

The best accounts of Boulangisme are in Barrès's *L'appel au soldat* and Adrien Dansette's *Le Boulangisme*. Mr. D. W. Brogan's masterly *Development of Modern France* also contains an admirable summary of it. The story recalls a warning made by Anacharsis Cloots during the Revolution : " France, guéris-toi des individus ! " Neglecting this advice, the French people accepted two Napoleons, each of whom left France smaller than he found it. Dazed with despair, they also accepted Pétain. But they would not accept Boulanger. And while his inferiority to Hitler both in audacity and brains is explanation enough, some credit is due to the superior political sense of the French people. Rich landowners and the Paris mob acclaimed Boulanger ; the peasants were more sagacious. There was corruption in the Third Republic, always. But so there was in the autocratic régimes of the Bourbons and the Napoleons. One difference between a democracy and a tyranny is that tyranny prevents the exposure, but fosters the growth, of corruption.

## DR. JOHNSON'S VERSE

MR. NICHOL SMITH at Oxford and Mr. McAdam at Yale had for a long while been separately engaged in editing Johnson's poems ; they decided to pool their labours, and the result is a noble volume\*—not only a war-time tribute to sound learning, but an auspicious exemplar of Anglo-American collaboration. No collected volume of the Doctor's poems appeared in his lifetime, and the edition promised by Boswell was never made. The chief difficulty, therefore, of the modern editors has been to determine the authenticity of the many miscellaneous verses that have been attributed to Johnson. His style in verse is not highly personal, so that internal evidence is seldom conclusive. It is characteristic of the editors' sedulity that they have found in a

\* *The Poems of Samuel Johnson*. Edited by David Nichol Smith and Edward L. McAdam.

seventeenth-century inscription at Tarbes a couple of hexameters that had been mistakenly attributed to Johnson. They have, on the other hand, restored to him the *Ode on Friendship*, which of recent years has been given to Mary Astell. The notes are succinct and highly interesting, the typography elegant; and all Johnsonians must be under a heavy debt to those responsible for this exemplary edition.

It was as a poet that Johnson first loomed into the public eye. His *London* was published anonymously in 1738, on the same day as Pope's *Epilogue to the Satires*, *Dialogue I*, and enjoyed a more immediate success. When told that the author was an obscure man named Johnson, Pope remarked: "He will soon be *déterré*"; and with no personal knowledge of him recommended him to the good offices of Lord Gower. *Irene* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, his two other most ambitious works in verse, did not appear till 1749, though the former had been completed in 1737. Throughout his life he continued to enjoy writing both English and Latin verse: this volume includes translations made in his schooldays and a Latin poem composed upon his death-bed.

How far Johnson can justly be considered a poet must depend upon one's definition of poetry. I do not mean that the sort of verse he practised is intrinsically unpoetical—on the contrary I believe Pope to be one of our finest poets. But between Pope's verse and Johnson's imitation of it, skilful as this is, the difference is enormous. Pope was distinguished by the delicacy of his ear. Moreover he continually excites two successive emotions—surprise at a phrase, and then delight in recognising that the surprising phrase could not be more felicitous. Johnson is usually eloquent, rarely surprising, and even more rarely musical. It is notable that his most famous couplet does contain a happy surprise:

There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,  
Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail.

In the first edition of the poem he wrote, not "the patron," but "the garret." Indignation with Lord Chesterfield inspired the revision that has made the line immortal. Johnson thought that the best couplet he ever wrote was:

Th' incumber'd oar scarce leaves the dreaded coast  
Through purple billows and a floating host.

Certainly this excites surprise, but does surprise give way to the delight of acceptance? Even when the wit quickens there is no music to give it wings:

All Marlborough hoarded, or all Villiers spent is in design a "right and left" worthy of Pope, but the succession of "or" sounds makes the line almost unpronounceable. His most beautiful single line, I would suggest, is the second in the couplet :

Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,  
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate ?

It is remarkable that Johnson's two principal poems should be paraphrases of Juvenal. The practice in which Pope excelled, of bringing classical poems up to date by the substitution of topical names and instances, demands ingenuity, excites enjoyment, and deserves revival. But, for Johnson, Juvenal seems a curious choice, since his gusto for indecency was so alien to the Doctor. Moreover Johnson, unlike Juvenal, considered that "gross wickedness" was rare. Let us examine part of the description of Charles XII :

He comes, not want and cold his course delay  
Hide, blushing Glory, hide Pultowa's day :  
The vanquished hero leaves his broken bands,  
And shows his miseries in distant lands ;  
Condemn'd a needy suppliant to wait,  
While ladies interpose and slaves debate.  
But did not Chance at length her error mend ?  
Did no subverted empire mark his end ?  
Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound ?  
Or hostile millions press him to the ground ?  
His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,  
A petty fortress and a dubious hand ;  
He left the name, at which the world grew pale,  
To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

Here is the parallel passage from Dryden, both poets basing themselves upon Juvenal's evocation of Hannibal :

In one deciding Battel overcome,  
He flies, is banisht from his Native home :  
Begs refuge in a Foreign Court, and there  
Attends, his mean Petition to prefer ;  
Repuls'd by surly Grooms, who wait before  
The sleeping Tyrant's interdicted Door.  
What wondrous sort of Death has Heav'n design'd,  
Distinguish'd from the Herd of Human Kind,  
For so untam'd, so turbulent a Mind !  
Nor Swords at hand, nor hissing Darts afar,  
Are doom'd t'Avenge the tedious bloody War,  
But Poyson, drawn through a Ring's hollow plate,  
Must furnish him ; a sucking Infant's Fate.

Go, climb the rugged *Alps*, Ambitious fool,  
To please the Boys, and be a Theme at School.

This comparison is certainly not unfair to Johnson, for these are the culminating lines of his most celebrated passage, while the Dryden quotation is in no way above the general level of his version. Johnson's concluding couplet is unforgettable, and the whole passage is eloquent, but how immensely superior the Dryden appears, alike in diction and in sound! Johnson complained that Dryden's translation preserved the wit, but wanted the dignity, of the original; the older poet's vigour, however, makes Johnson's style seem flabby and upholstered. I would go so far as to suggest that the Dryden, while susceptible of improvement, rises to poetry, and the Johnson, though elaborately polished, stays merely most accomplished verse. I think, moreover, that this becomes even clearer when one compares Johnson, not with such great poets as Dryden and Pope, but with Goldsmith:

The watchdog's voice that bay'd the whisp'ring wind,  
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind . . .

Methinks her patient sons before me stand  
Where the broad ocean leans against the land . . .

Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,  
Or by the lazy Scheldt, or wandering Po . . .

These lines reveal a poetic ear and imagination such as I cannot perceive Johnson to have possessed. One remembers, with bewilderment, that Sir Walter Scott "had more pleasure in reading *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* than any other poetical compositions he could remember."

*Irene* strikes me as the feeblest work ever designed by a powerful writer, the dullest ever published by a wit. But one needs to compare it with other English eighteenth-century tragedies, and I have read no other except *Cato*, which is very markedly superior to *Irene*. This edition prints Johnson's rough draft for the tragedy, which would be interesting if anything concerning so tedious a work could interest. Parts of this are in prose, which he then turned into lines of equal length. (Racine also, amazingly, wrote his tragedies first in prose.) Johnson cannot be said to practise the art of sinking, because here there is nothing to sink from. His more ambitious flights result in such comical images as this:

—How chang'd alas!—Now ghastly Desolation  
In Triumph sits upon our shatter'd Spires. . . .

That Johnson should lack a sense of the theatre is not surprising. But, an enthusiastic admirer of Shakespeare and *Paradise Lost*, how came he to write such primitive blank verse, in which nineteen lines out of twenty end with a stop? A faulty ear led him to suppose that a variety of pauses made the metre of blank verse imperceptible. "If blank verse be not tumid and gorgeous," he further declared, "it is crippled prose." The verse of *Irene* is never gorgeous, yet he took more pains with it than with anything else he wrote.

The lines on Dr. Levett deserve their high reputation, but by an irony that Dr. Johnson would hardly have appreciated, the poem from his pen now most popular is the *Short Song of Congratulation* written, as late as 1780, for the coming of age of Thrale's nephew, Sir John Lade :

Loosen'd from the Minor's tether,  
Free to mortgage or to sell,  
Wild as wind, and light as feather  
Bid the slaves of thrift farewell. . . .

Wealth, Sir John, was made to wander,  
Let it wander where it will ;  
See the Jocky, see the Pander,  
Bid them come, and take their fill.

As the likeness of this poem to some of Housman's has frequently been remarked, it is interesting that the last line I have quoted appears in one manuscript as "Come my lads and take your fill." Johnson told Mrs. Thrale that the poem was "one of the author's first essays in that way of writing, and a beginner is always to be treated with tenderness." Alas, the septuagenarian beginner did not persevere.

Of the poems printed for the first time in this edition, an early work in the same metre as Smart's *Song to David* is the most noteworthy. And, though no judge of Latin verse, I like this epigram on Mrs. Thrale, which she never printed and which has hitherto appeared only in the *John Rylands Library Bulletin* :

Hostem odit tacitè, sed amicum ridet apertè  
Thralia. Quid mavis ? tutius hostis eris.

I prefer the author of *Rasselas* and *The Lives of the Poets* to the author of *London* ; and the subject of Boswell's biography to either. His prose is among the best in our tongue ; and his verse, if not that of a poet, is such as only a great writer could compose. Because of their topicality, I should like to end with the lines about Charles XII, immediately preceding those already quoted:

No joys to him pacific scepters yield,  
 War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field ;  
 Behold surrounding kings their pow'r combine,  
 And one capitulate, and one resign ;  
 Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain ;  
 ' Think nothing gain'd, he cries, till nought remain,  
 On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,  
 And all be mine beneath the polar sky.'  
 The march begins in military state,  
 And nations on his eye suspended wait ;  
 Stern Famine guards the solitary coast,  
 And Winter barricades the realms of Frost.

May this *sors Johnsoniana* prove a true prophecy, and a second  
 Poltava point the same moral as the first.

## LYTTON STRACHEY

THE writers of the Twenties successfully challenged some of the sexual taboos imposed by the Victorian Age upon English literature. But they usually retained an inherited decorum which prevented them from making public their personal problems and their feelings about their friends. It has been a task of the next generation to abolish this inhibition, witness the writings of Mr. Stephen Spender, Mr. Connolly and Mr. Isherwood. Among Lytton Strachey's closest friends were several of the best writers of our time, but none of these—except Mr. Desmond MacCarthy in one or two short articles—has written any account of him. And it has been left to Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar, an Indian professor, to attempt the first full-length study of his work.\* He is inspired by admiration, though he never sinks into hero-worship, and he writes with a modesty that commands immediate respect. His first chapter, on Lytton Strachey's life, would be better away, since he has not been in a position to collect the necessary information. Mr. James Strachey has contributed a few facts, but there are a number of inaccuracies, and the background is absent. Lytton Strachey was born in the intellectual purple. His parents, his brothers and sisters, were conspicuous for strength

\* *Lytton Strachey*. By K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar.

of intelligence and of character. Even his cousins glittered. His Cambridge life was most important in forming his opinions, and mention should be made of such figures as Lowes Dickinson, and the philosopher, George Moore. Dr. Iyengar refers to the verses Strachey contributed to an undergraduate anthology *Euphrosyne*, but does not quote from these, though they show a gift for verse similar to Rupert Brooke's. He presumes that Strachey must have visited France once before settling in Wiltshire : in fact, like most of his circle, he was hardly less at home in France than in England, and he also travelled widely in other European countries. Another serious misunderstanding is revealed by the statement that he had few intimate friends. On the contrary, he possessed an astonishing power of establishing intimacy. Of persons whom he took against (sometimes on very inadequate grounds) he could be intolerant to the point of rudeness, but he was one of the most warmly affectionate men I have known. It was a great delight to arrive at his Wiltshire home—not a cottage, as Dr. Iyengar suggests, but a rambling house of the Miss Austen period, with long verandahs looking south to the Downs, and a library upstairs, lined with French and English eighteenth-century authors in their original editions. There were fine pictures too, modern pictures, for Strachey was very alert in his senses, responding to all the arts of life. He had a particular taste and gift for nonsense, and when playing some paper-game in the evening, would throw across to one an improvised quatrain about a friend or a pussy-cat. I think that the delight in extravagant behaviour which appears in many of his portraits was partly fellow-feeling, for he was deeply unconventional, and never had the "nonsense" knocked out of him at a Public School. But he not only *was* "a character"—he *had* character. The mention of some writer or politician would suddenly reveal, behind the wit and the warmth, an unpardoning sense of right and wrong. The brisk assurance of his indignation would have astonished those who thought to dismiss him as an elegant trifler.

Strachey had a particular gusto for the complication of human nature. Gordon ? "There were intertwining contradictions—intricate recesses where egoism and renunciation melted into one another." Prince Albert ? "There was contradiction in his nature, which to some of those who knew him had made him seem an inexplicable enigma : he was severe and gentle ; he was modest and scornful ; he longed for affection and was cold." Mr. Gladstone ? "Did his very essence lie in the confusion of incompatibles ?" Bacon ? "It was not by the juxtaposition of a



few opposites but by the infiltration of a multitude of highly varied elements, that his mental composition was made up. He was no striped frieze, he was shot silk." To a great portrait-painter such intricacies have evidently the fascination of a challenge—any practitioner can catch the simple features of a fully integrated man like Wellington or Scott. But for Strachey, I think, complicated characters had a further charm—they reflected a duality in his own nature. He was idolatrous in love alike of Shakespeare and Racine ; he wrote with equal sympathy of Browne and of Pope ; he managed to harmonise in himself the mind of Voltaire and the feelings of Gray. Dr. Iyengar justly calls him "a romantic by temperament, a classicist by training, and often, in his own literary practice, both." In a different context he quotes a passage from *Character and Circumstance* about Horace Walpole :

Perhaps the really essential element in the letter-writer's make-up is a certain strain of femininity. The unmixed male—the great man of action, the solid statesman—does not express himself happily on these little bits of paper that go by post . . . In the curious composition of Gibbon . . . there was decidedly a touch of the she-cat, the naughty old maid. In Walpole himself it is easy to perceive at once the sinuosity and graces of a fine lady, the pettishness of a dowager, the love of trifles of a maiden aunt, and even, at moments, the sensitiveness of a girl.

A strain of femininity helped to make Strachey himself not only a good letter-writer but a great biographer. No "unmixed male" could have sympathised as he did with the feelings of Queen Victoria, or of Queen Elizabeth ; and it is noticeable that in none of his writings was he harsh about a woman. To Victoria indeed he was too kind, painting her old age in unjustifiably gentle tones. (His book, it must be remembered, appeared before the final volumes of the Correspondence, which altered his view of her later years.) Strachey was conspicuously a Man of Feeling, in the Eighteenth Century sense. Of Macaulay he writes : "His sentences have no warmth and no curves ; the embracing fluidity of love is lacking." Strachey's style reflects very exactly his character, penetrating, pungent and mischievous, but suave, caressing, and at instants suddenly emotional.

He was indefatigably surprised by the desipience of *homo sapiens*—his favourite epithets remained "unparalleled," "singular" and "preposterous"—but as the years passed, he came to understand better the causes of absurd behaviour. In *Eminent Victorians*, his first book, he hardly notices one of the most extraordinary features of Miss Nightingale's life—the

illness that confined her to purdah for the second half of her life, an illness that was self-inflicted and indeed imaginary. But in his study of Froude, written towards the end of his life, he ventured a diagnosis : " We have our modern psychology to give us confidence," and Froude's trouble was his old father, " a hunting parson of a severely conventional type, with a marked talent for water-colours." Strachey could not, however, arrive at any understanding of one enigma, the most perplexing of all. How could an intelligent man believe in the doctrines of Christianity? There was Lord Acton, for instance—but he preferred to avert his eyes from Lord Acton, except when a letter from the great historian came in handy for putting Bishop Creighton in his place. Unlike the Encyclopaedists, Strachey had not been brought up in a nursery and a school that were even conventionally Christian, nor had he enjoyed, at a Public School, the privilege of listening to passages from the Authorised Version read aloud eight or fourteen times a week—a privilege that is often a Public School's chief contribution to the study of English literature. The lack of such experiences considerably invalidated his assaults upon the Church : never having lived inside the fortress, he was aware of only those weaknesses in her defensive system which she was least able to disguise. And of her strength he was not aware at all.

Dr. Iyengar complains of his " libidinous imagery," and declares that he at once detested and was allured by " the terrible phenomenon of sex." The allurements are as obvious in Strachey's writings as in Gibbon's or Voltaire's. But the detestation? I see no evidence for this. He was a most unpromising man in a dozen ways, possessed of an eighteenth-century assurance about right and wrong; and nothing—except brutality and ignorance—shocked him more than puritanism. Puritanism indeed, to his eyes, revealed a brutal love of ignorance. In his accounts of the great Toynbee edition of Horace Walpole, he repeatedly complains of the bowdlerisation—" barbarous prudery." His plea for freedom—*Avons-Nous Changé Tout Cela?* is eloquent, powerful, and passionate.

To summarise Strachey as an eighteenth century man is too simple. He had no illusions about that period : it was infuriating in its self-sufficiency. " A world, for instance, in which Voltaire's criticism of Hamlet, or Walpole's of Dante—' a Methodist parson in Bedlam '—could be meant seriously and taken seriously, would certainly have been a most depressing world to live in." He knew too that it was not sceptical : " its beliefs were rigid, intense and unperturbable." In literature, as in every other

department of life, etiquette was codified and dominant. Yet the cultivated society of the period "was perhaps the most civilised that our history has known. Never, at any rate, has literature been so respected in England." Strachey as this remark shows, was quintessentially a Man of Letters. He was lazy, to this extent, that he preferred reading books to writing them. But he was tireless in lifting his writing to the highest point of which he was capable. Even short studies—like the *Six English Historians*, which I take to be among his most exquisite performances—entailed enormous labour. Objection can be taken to some of his mannerisms—he was fond of dots and dashes and underlinings; and he allowed himself a free use of clichés. But his aim was not to write purple passages, or to contribute to Anthologies of English Prose. His aim was narrative. Here is his judgment of Gibbon's critics:

Obsessed by the colour and movement of romantic prose, they were blind to the subtlety, the clarity, the continuous strength of Gibbon's writing. Gibbon could turn a bold phrase with the best of them—"the fat slumber of the Church," for instance—if he wanted to; but he very rarely wanted to; such effect would have disturbed the easy, close-knit, homogeneous surface of his work.

This passage applies to Strachey. The most felicitous phrase, if it might hold up the current, was rarely permitted to remain, however pretty the ripple it might make. Each sentence is so contrived that one is obliged to read its successor.

Three qualities, he says, make a historian; "a capacity for absorbing facts, a capacity for stating them, and a point of view." In the preface to *Eminent Victorians*, he pretends, with transparent disingenuousness, to be impartial. He was little more dispassionate than the two greatest English historians, Gibbon and Macaulay. Occasionally he even cooked a fact; there is no evidence, I believe, that Dr. Arnold's legs were short. Newman, painted for the sake of contrast as a dove, was in fact armed with talons and a beak far sharper than Manning's. It is true that Bacon, at the end of his life, was "an old man disgraced, shattered, alone, on Highgate Hill, stuffing a dead fowl with snow"; but the phrase is carefully misleading. This was no crazed King Lear, but a scientist making a brilliant experiment in the technique of refrigeration. In such instances the dramatist in Strachey ran away with the historian. *Elizabeth and Essex*, indeed, is a tissue of imaginative hypotheses. It is best described as a picturesque tragedy in five acts, and it revealed its author, who wrote at least one unpublished play, as an incurable romantic.

He owned that these Renaissance characters eluded him, so mingled in them were elegance and brutality. But in how many instances (as he pointed out) had great historians been at daggers drawn with their subject: Gibbon devoted the industry of a lifetime to the study of barbarism and superstition; Michelet, a romantic and a Republican, was at his best in delineating the classic and despotic centuries. "Who," Strachey wrote in *Elizabeth and Essex*, "Who can reconstruct those iron-nerved beings who passed with rapture from some divine madrigal sung to a lute by a bewitching boy in a tavern to the spectacle of mauled dogs tearing a bear to pieces?" This I take as a confession of his own inadequacy to the Renaissance subject. The parallels of "those iron-nerved beings" are to be found in the cafés of Seville, rather than at Chanteloup and Hawarden. It therefore remains impossible, I think, not to wish that Strachey had given to a more congenial theme the time he spent upon *Elizabeth and Essex*. If he had lived, he might have been inspired to his masterpiece by the life of his favourite Voltaire.

Dr. Iyengar ends his book with some just animadversions upon the imitators of Strachey. Their books indeed are like the modernistic carpets in the Tottenham Court Road, which parody with mean absurdity the old designs of Cubist painters. Strachey's irony is replaced by prep-school sarcasm, his lapidary phrases by flaking plaster. I can think of no good writer who has had a worse influence. Confronted with these unreadable smart Alecks one longs for the old-fashioned biography in which you can find at least facts and dates. Imitation proves the most murderous form of flattery. But re-read Strachey, and I fancy that you will find your old admiration for him increased. Here are the values peculiar to Western civilisation, the inheritance that it is now our passion to defend. For Lytton Strachey celebrated and embodied the light of disinterested reason, the potency of art, the geniality of friendship.

## THE AMBERLEY PAPERS

HERE is a new classic\*—the best book of its sort since the *Private Correspondence of Lord Granville Leveson-Gower*. If you like social history, this is an unsurpassed picture of cultivated English life

\* *The Amberley Papers*. Edited by Bertrand and Patricia Russell.

in the Sixties : if you like character, here is one of the most fascinating of Victorian women. The book has over eleven hundred pages, yet it is as it were only the surviving fragment of a much larger work, and the reader has to bridge the gaps as best he can with his own imagination. The Great Novelist in whose inimitable masterpiece the hopes and disappointments of each one of us are entertaining incidents, our characters providing comic relief, and our sudden, incomprehensible disasters forming necessary parts of the nice artistic pattern, is supremely an ironist. And the tattered scraps of one chapter, here surprisingly preserved, show His customary, not to say exaggerated, dislike for happy endings. Is it not wanton prodigality in an artist to polish off so prematurely one of his happiest inventions ?

Kate Stanley is introduced to us, a little girl in a large family, reading *The Castle of Otranto* on the way to the Naval Review and enjoying hunting more than parties. At sixteen she is taken to Thackeray's lecture on George III. "It reminded one of Racine and Boileau going to read their poetry to a select and fashionable society. Thackeray's daughters would not come, as they say they don't like hearing their father lecture, they think it infradigue." Her reading is strictly supervised. She is not allowed to read Jowett, or further than the middle of the second volume of *The Mill on the Floss*. When she is eighteen we begin to fall in love with her. Here she is at that age, writing in October, 1860 :

Poor Miss White spoke of Amergau the other day and got dreadfully excited over it & said she thought much less well of anyone who went there knowing what it was I am afraid I made her very uncomfortable about the state of my mind she thinks me so lax & cannot bear to hear me speak of any serious subject.

I do not like being here alone & yet I do not mind it so much. I am afraid it is selfish it is because no one finds fault with me. I should learn to bear reproof better—if I was more humble I should—

My cockatoo is blinking my dog snoring the fire crackling & the gong sounding for tea. I must go—I am too happy now I fear to last so for many years. Sorrow always comes some time—

How independent and spirited she is ! "Do they think that religion shows itself in caring for what is most commonplace it seems so. Certainly one's whole education is a state of repression of all strong feelings and wishes." And when Lord Derby has entertained 1,200 volunteers at Knowsley, "I am so tired," she writes, "of the mutton-pies the volunteers had—it is mentioned in every paper." But there are consolations, like riding "with Lady W. Powlete she is sixty-nine but still rides

wonderfully and canters like fun ; she was very wicked Papa says when she was young and peculiar too as she once had a cast done of her legs." And she can write what she likes to her clever brother Lyulph at Balliol. When she hears Jowett is coming to stay for the New Year, she wants to make slippers for him, but they " would take me too long, though he has such a nice little foot." On the 29th, however, she reports that he is " pleased with the slippers which he would always quote when he was accused of heresy as it was generally a great proof of orthodoxy to have slippers worked for one."

Meanwhile, Johnnie Russell, the son of Lord John, born in the same year as Kate, was being educated at Harrow and Cambridge, a very serious and devout young man. He lost his heart to an Irish boy at Harrow, and they read together *Eric or Little by Little*, and prayed together, and Johnnie was very jealous. And a little later he liked kissing Miss Janet Chambers, and again it was all very high-minded, and they talked seriously, and eventually she died. Johnnie (Lord Amberley, now that his father had taken an Earldom) met Kate in 1863 ; she came to stay, and he found her " wonderfully intellectual." She lost a bracelet in the garden and " we went about partly searching and partly conversing. She showed some interest in Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, when I mentioned it, though I told her I thought it would not be allowed that she should read it. We played at croquet after breakfast till nearly one." In fact, they were perfectly suited to one another, both wonderfully intellectual, and she with the high spirits which he lacked. So they fell in love, and after six months' separation, insisted upon by his mother, they married and lived in ideal happiness. The honeymoon was spent at Woburn, lent them by " the Duke "—who only appears either to pay election expenses or to lend his house for such occasions. We have lost our hearts to Kate, and are not sure at first that Amberley is good enough for her. He is shadowy, and sometimes seems rather a stick, but if you knew him intimately, he must have been a pet, and Kate remained in love with him till her death.

The two young things encouraged one another in political radicalism and religious scepticism. They attended every sort of religious service, Catholic, Quaker, Irvingite, Unitarian, Swedenborgian, Mormon and Jewish. They went to America, they made friends with Mill and the Grotes. They did not hunt or shoot, and became increasingly suspect in their own world. Nothing was too bad to say of a pair with such shocking opinions. Kate said that class against class was better than class over

class ; and when Amberley fought an election in South Devon, some remarks about preventing large families which he had made at a private meeting of the Dialectical Society were used very effectively against him. Kate was an enthusiast for female education, but Miss Davies refused to have her on the Committee for founding Girton—her name was too dangerous. Undismayed, she gave a public lecture in favour of Woman Suffrage, and was consequently very much ridiculed by *The Times*. Worse still, when Lord and Lady Russell took her to tea with Queen Mary's parents, the Duchess of Cambridge said : " I know you, you are the daughter-in-law, but now I hear you only like dirty people and dirty Americans. All London is full of it ; all the clubs are talking of it. I must look at yr. petticoats to see if they are dirty," upon which Lady Stanley was properly indignant : " I never heard anything more grossly ill-bred than the Dss. of Cambridge's manners but she was always *mal élevée*"—and Amberley remembered his Russell ancestry : " The Duchess of Cambridge's insolence is surprising. If this sort of royal canaille cannot learn to keep their places I should simply refuse to meet them in society."

Amberley sometimes reminds one of the Prince Consort : " Strange is it," he writes of himself, " that one should be so fortunate in love, winning a jewel which he can wear all his life, while others as good and pure as he are left out in comfortless and melancholy single life." He reads Marcus Aurelius, of course, and composes elaborate prayers to the " Infinite and Mysterious Power" in Whom, or Which, he faintly believes. But there is never a hint of disapproval of his charmingly impetuous wife. His health was not very good, and though he fought a rough election with success, Kate was doubtless right when she wrote, " I fear he will never shine in Politics, he wants readiness and adaptability to people & circumstances." Here is a funny and somehow touching picture of him from her journal.

Our wedding day. . . . In the evg. Mary Stevens (the housemaid) is so ill with pain in her face that I suggested A shd mesmerize her though he has never tried anyone before so she came into the study at 8.30 p.m. & sat in an arm chair & in 2 minutes (A making passes) she was fast asleep, we moved her on to the sofa & there she slept till 6 next mg. & woke up quite free from pain and feeling quite well & rested, she had had the pain 9 days—nearly constantly. It was very interesting as before we did not know that A had the power & it was done so quickly.

The book beguiles us with many glimpses of eminent Victorians : Burton quarrelling with his wife about mesmerism ; Panizzi

explaining that the decline in wit was due to the decline in drinking—"Sheridan was never witty till he was drunk"; John Bright making the House of Commons laugh for three minutes by mispronouncing "Pytchley"; Mr. Gladstone trying to learn to sleep in the House, and being annoyed by members behind putting their feet on the bench, which shook it; Mrs. Francis Newman jumping out of a window to avoid meeting Martineau; Jowett putting his little hands on his knees and urging the unconventional pair never to go against the world unnecessarily—"I may change" comments Kate, "but now I feel a strong inclination to go against the world"; and Mill supporting her: "It is much better to establish a character for strangeness, there is nothing like it, then one can do what one likes." Mrs. Grote confides that two old men have had passions for her, and her aged husband has been in love with a girl; Trollope's loud voice drowns Huxley's pleasant quiet voice, which is certainly better worth hearing; George Eliot's face is "repulsively ugly fr. the immense size of the chin, but when she smiles, it lights up amazingly and she looks both good and loving and gentle." Mill reads Shelley's *Ode to Liberty* "rocking backwards and forwards and nearly choking with emotion." Mrs. Carlyle writes that her maid has "been making—a *Baby*—the *treachery*!" Carlyle abuses everything and everyone. "He said he did not know one good man in all England & that he thought we were going down into a state of destruction very rapidly. . . . Mrs. Carlyle sat patiently by & when asked if it was always the same she said 'Always' with a sigh."

Then there are the relations, always ready in the nineteenth century with impertinent advice and disapproval. Kate's brother becomes a Mohammedan, and, when he succeeds his father, explains that the Koran gives full directions for managing a property. Simultaneously he reveals the fact that he has been married for years to a Spanish lady, a Catholic, too, and of most dubious respectability. His widowed mother refuses to receive her: Kate writes: "My first thought was that the grief was diminished to a certain extent from the feeling that He would never know it:" she goes to see her sister-in-law, and notes that she sits in bed in the morning till one. There is Kate's sister Rosamund, who became Lady Carlisle, and destroyed all the wine in the cellars of Naworth and Castle Howard; there is her brother Algernon, who became first a Ritualist, and then a Monsignor. Best of all there is her godmother, Aunt Louisa, who can be trusted to write a letter of proper disapproval whenever Kate or Amberley disgrace themselves by Radicalism, feminism, or



similar nonsense : " I have been terribly ashamed of my God-daughter & think it is a great pity she was not born an American without either noble name or rank, a simple Kitty Hopkins—I wonder you do not go & settle in America their ways wd. suit you far better, I do not suppose you find many English women who will help you in crying out for their rights."

We watch Kate and her husband with increasing amusement as their elder son proves so unlike his estimable parents, with increasing affection as their cult of reason leads them farther and further from the opinions appropriate to their exalted station. Then suddenly comes the catastrophe. Kate and her daughter die in 1874, Amberley eighteen months later ; and naughty Frank and good little Bertie are left to their ageing and fussy grandmother. To our eyes this end is inartistically abrupt, but probably it would be justified by the next chapter, if one could read it. And so we are left impatient to continue our incomparable novel, with a description of two small boys developing their rebellious intelligence in the gentle, deprecatory, muffled atmosphere of Lady Russell's home in Richmond Park.

Admirably edited, with brilliant introductory chapters on the Stanleys and Russells, these two volumes are delightful and rich beyond my powers of description, and are already part of the necessary furniture of every English country house.

## PAST PLEASURES

IF one is by nature unintrospective, the pleasures of memory and of looking forward seem feeble compared with that of living in the moment, taking to one's arms *le vierge le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui*. But, since the War I have done a great deal of remembering, and so, I suspect, have most of my contemporaries. The present is vivacious only at moments, and though the future may be bright, I don't fancy that its particular brightness will be congenial to those of us who are already inelastic with middle age. But I still find the pleasures of memory greatly mixed with pains. To remember the sorrows of the past is to renew them ; to remember its pleasures is to lament their loss. Yet I find now that I can't stop myself recollecting ; and at moments I envy those who can

satisfy this unwilling and teasing desire by begetting a book of reminiscences. Alas, I have not the gifts required—I have an uncommonly vague memory, I have never kept a diary, I do not know even in what years the signal events of my adult life have happened, nor could I convey to others vivid pictures of the persons I have known best. But the past is not the less powerful for being thus unfocused. There are streets in London that I can never enter without wincing, so urgently do they revive some old distress; and when I am in Paris I seem to see a dozen Parises with superimposed semi-transparent contours trembling in front of the existent city, the Paris that dazzled the schoolboy, the Paris where I lived in such a respectable family before going to Oxford, the Paris that I used to pass through during the last War, and then a whole succession of Parises, associated with different clans and with different absorptions. Latterly I have indeed found these memories obstructive, as if the hours of the past had accumulated on the pavements, layer upon layer of dead leaves making it difficult for me to move to my current occupations. In Venice it was much the same—loving a city for a long while carries a penalty: unlike human beings, a place may not alter to the eye, but the time comes when it evokes a tumult of memories which drape in a haze the material and beautiful facts.

As we grow older

The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated  
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment  
Isolated, with no before and after,  
But a lifetime burning in every moment.

Such ruminations as these have repeatedly interrupted my reading of an autobiography, *Return Ticket*, by George Vandon. The author has taken a pseudonym—and it would not be civil for me to give his identity—but he presents the other facts undisguised. He is four or five years my junior, but I have known him, though never intimately, for over twenty years. We share many interests and many friends, and so it happens that reading his book I have at moments had the odd feeling that I was reading my own reminiscences. But in "George Vandon" there are two persons—first a writer, unconventional, cosmopolitan, very clever, who has educated his taste and imagination to digest all the arts of civilisation; and secondly, an aristocrat who, inheriting a peerage, an Adam mansion in Yorkshire and considerable lands, has shouldered these privileges with the bothersome responsibilities they entail. *Return Ticket* is the story of Dorian Gray turning, for half the year, into Squire Beltham. Here is a part of his self-portrait:

Rightly or wrongly, I remain what André Gide calls *disponible* ; I can leap off at any tangent : in a century of vast transitions where everything is quicksand, I am (though I cannot say I actually enjoy it) really in my element ; for I belong nowhere. Why should I object, if my heart were in it, if my soul could gladly smell as much of loam as my boots, to being thought a backwoodsman ? Why should I object, if I were a pillar of "café society" and enjoyed it, to my country neighbours thinking of me as such, and to their being half-awed and half contemptuous of so remote and unreal a glamour ? . . . Why do I jib when foreigners ask, before my too fluent French, "But you are not a bit like an Englishman ! " ? Because all these desires to pin me down impinge on what I believe I care for more than most things on earth : my adaptability.

I can imagine the pursed censorious lips with which many excellent persons would receive *Return Ticket*. George Vandon is the aesthete unashamed :

Nothing will make me believe that a few unpaid intellectual idlers are a crime or a uselessness for a State to possess. After all they have taken from us power ; they are taking money ; at least let them leave us our dilettantism. And we call it dilettantism ; but can I not be more useful, potentially, than many of these human termites, that ought to go back to school every ten years, I who have the time, the brains and the desire to follow the real course of humanity, that chimera with feet of lead and wings of gold ?

For my part, I find this arrogance decidedly refreshing. George Vandon has enjoyed a life packed with fascinating and valuable experiences. Also he has been much less idle than he pretends. He was of course lucky, being remarkably gifted with intelligence, good health and good looks. But what is even more uncommon than possessing such gifts—he has known how to use them ; and this in spite of a childhood and boyhood so chequered as to invite neurosis. Recently there has been a queer fashion for disparaging happiness : envy and inadequacy to life have disguised themselves as a hunger for social justice, with the purpose of making happy people feel guilty. The external conditions required for happiness are indeed lamentably rare—congenial work and sufficient leisure ; but even those who have these privileges often fail to profit by them. And if one has had the luck to enjoy life, it seems to me a matter not for guilt but for gratitude, and even for pride. So I find most estimable George Vandon's catalogue of past pleasures. Such persons as he, with particular talents for the arts of life, have been too much bullied lately by their puritanical juniors. Crosspatches who have

never earned a penny in their lives upbraid industrious writers and painters with indifference to the "working" classes. Neurotics, who transfer their hatred of their fathers into a hatred of all familiar institutions, presume to call "escapists" those who think Giotto, Shakespeare and Beethoven supremely important. But the apprehension of beauty is neither frivolous nor easy. Like the pursuit of knowledge and the cherishing of affection, it makes life worth living, gives a meaning to man's long evolution from the first vertebrates and anthropoids. This at least was a belief common among the generation to which I belong.

It is high time that a word was said in favour of the wicked "Nineteen-Twenties." The disapproving young seem to think that we of the Twenties devoted our time to party-going and debauchery. There were, of course, the Bright Young People, and very bright some of them were, and it is better for young people to be bright than to be dull. But the Twenties were a period of conspicuous energy in art and thought. We were not so unconcerned with politics as people now suppose; but a war had left us slightly sceptical of political machinery. We thought—and these views have not altered—that economic changes however desirable, were less urgent than a revolution in education; that discovering how to improve the individual was infinitely more important than giving more power to the State. (We had seen during the "Great" war an advance model of Totalitarianism.) We thought, in fine, that Freud was piercing deeper into the heart of the human problem than Marx had ever done. Aldous Huxley in this respect remains a characteristic Twenties figure, though his puritanical misanthropy was particular to himself; and his beliefs to-day are an extreme projection of convictions common to many of us. He holds that organised mysticism is the way to make people better; while I retain a faint faith in the future of applied psychology. I believe moreover, that the possibility of improvement depends on our destroying Nazism, and that Nazism can be destroyed only by force. But despite my disagreement with Huxley in these matters, I still think he has diagnosed our distresses more profoundly than any economic determinist.

My recollections of "Between the Wars" have carried me a long way from George Vandon. In the Twenties he was in Paris, Warsaw, Madrid; and the London of the time is hardly mentioned. I doubt if he knew Lytton Strachey, E. M. Forster, Desmond MacCarthy or Aldous Huxley, and his book is not that Apologia for an Age which I want to see. He is indeed too insolently an individual to defend anything except himself, and only occasion-

ally does he condescend even to this. His manner is not conciliatory. For he manages to regard his life with unflattering detachment, applying to himself much of the coldness one feels in his accounts of other people. His early life is very well done : in a few sentences we see the mother who extorted admiration without giving love ; and then comes the misery of Charterhouse, with barn-door capons and geese pecking at the young swan. Oxford, Paris, embassies and journalism follow ; till the aesthete, given up to the civilised pleasures, abandons this addiction for the labours of a business-like landowner. The last chapter is a severe indictment in which he pours scorn on the " Little Man," frivolous, puerile, a hater of intellect and art, the " Little Man " who is the ironic issue of a century of well-intended and reasonable reforms. George Vandon is one of the last specimens of a disappearing race—the intelligent aristocrats who believe in aristocracy. Surprisingly, he seems not to recognise that the death of the aristocracy is a suicide. When they abandoned taste, they lost their chief *raison d'être*. Countless Laszlos in the Stately Homes are the buboes that betray a mortal and self-inflicted pestilence.

George Vandon is sometimes malicious about the persons he mentions, which is a mistake, I think, in a pseudonymous book ; but the only activity (and this is characteristic of the Twenties) that excites his strong disapproval is being " on the make." Too many sentences are cluttered with an agglomeration of names, collected with the pertinacity of a bower-bird or a hostess. But how admirably he can write ! The style is ostentatiously elaborate, like the façade of a baroque cathedral in Spain. The planned meanderings of a Henry James or a Proust are used to express a violent romanticism which thousands of books and places and musics have further invigorated. This is iridescent, rhetorical prose, such as few living writers dare to employ. I recommend *Return Ticket* urgently to other survivors from the Twenties, who will recover from it their own past ; and no less to the earnest intellectuals of a later vintage, who will enjoy, by contrast, a sense of their own worthiness and superiority.

## AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

OBIT NOVEMBER 20, 1933.

THE death of Augustine Birrell is like the fall of a noble tree, the survivor of a venerable avenue. Asquith, his great leader, Morley, his close friend, died before him; nor, I think, is anyone left to tell us what he was like as a young man. I happen to be almost the only person under forty, outside his family, who knew him well; and I will try to convey the imposing impression which he made upon me. It sprang from his age, his wit, his experience of men and affairs, his reading, his grand appearance, but above all from what is vaguely called "character." He had a massive emotional simplicity particular to an older generation than mine. This simplicity was masked by a genial cynicism which set the usual tone in which he commented on all human beings, including himself. He was a Victorian, but entirely without humbug; he was frequently contemptuous, but always without conceit. A fortnight before his death he was saying to me that he could not understand how he ever had achieved Cabinet rank: he had never been ambitious, he had never been hard-working, but somehow other people had pushed him forward. He said he had always acted on an old politician's advice, "Never ask for anything, never refuse anything." An engraving of his favourite Dr. Johnson hung over the mantelpiece in his study, and he had cultivated a Johnsonian impatience with fools. He was saturated in the literature, politics and theology of the English eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the same time, he was Victorian in his indifference to many subjects that would occupy an equally intelligent man to-day. He derived little sensuous pleasure from his eyes, none at all from his ears. He enormously admired Balzac, but read him only in translation. He was no more aware of Frazer, of Freud, or even of Karl Marx, than he was of Manet and Wagner. But he would call one an "ignorant dog" for not having read Dr. Hoadly and Dr. Gibson. The genial and truculent limitation of his culture somehow made him more impressive, more monumental—to a degree, indeed, which might have made him seem remote, had he not also tacitly conveyed that he recognised the existence of interests and enthusiasms not his own. Yet to his contemporaries he had appeared something of a dilettante; certainly too much interested in literature for a politician, too much occupied with politics for a man of letters.

When he called his first book *Obiter Dicta*, he defined his chief merit as a critic. His critical and biographical monographs

delight chiefly by their incidental comments. Open one of his books at almost any page and you will find such a remark as this one, on the Established Church :

It is the external church, the bricks and mortar, the ivy-mantled tower, nestling in the valley hard by the "Blue Boar," the chiming of the bells on a Sunday morning as they fall on the ears of men walking in an opposite direction, that appeal to these stalwart sons of the Establishment.

He loved to speak as a philistine about literary questions, knowing perfectly well what he was doing ; and he proved over and over again how much an enlightened commonsense could contribute to criticism.

I never tired of hearing him talk of the past. A slight North Country burr comported with the trenchancy of his remarks. These were often surprising as well as witty. He told me for instance, that Mr. Gladstone was not an alarming person to meet, because one felt "an insufficiency in him ;" yet he admired the old Eagle enormously. Again, I should have supposed that the home of a pious Baptist minister in Liverpool in the Fifties and Sixties would have been a rather prison-like place for a clever boy. But the young Augustine was allowed to read anything and go anywhere, including the theatre. And one of the few masterpieces of English literature that he never knew well was the Bible. He remembered seeing Hawthorne in 1858 ; he first met Gladstone in 1869 ; he had heard Brougham speak, and Mill and Bright. He had known Matthew Arnold and Carlyle and Browning, and, of course, Tennyson, whose daughter-in-law he married. He talked, when I knew him, little about his work as a Cabinet Minister, and I fancy that its unhappy close had made him prefer to forget. But the last word on his Irish Secretaryship has not yet been spoken. The author of the two-volume life of Michael Collins maintains that "the biggest obstacle that we had to encounter was the cleverness of Birrell's policy. He cleverly appeared as not interfering with us, while taking care that we were effectually silenced." But politicians are judged at the time by results ; and the possibility that the Rebellion would have taken place sooner but for Mr. Birrell's "astute benevolence" is obscured by the fact that it took place at all. His Education Bill was a good one, so it was killed by the Lords. He would not have admitted that he had been a failure as a politician ; but that others should think so he recognised as inevitable.

He loved good talk, and when he could not get it he was content with amiable company. Almost to the last he was a

constant diner-out. His violent and witty sincerity made him the most welcome of guests. He humoured no one present, but he put all in a good humour. His own talk was at its very best in the company of the few women he cared for, and his constant companions were his two sons, who lived with him.

As a young man Augustine Birrell had written of Swift with a mixture of admiration and disgust ; yet on re-reading him he was surprised to find his disgust had vanished. He detested humbug, and believed an honest scepticism should be allowed its say on every subject : what was true could stand such tests. The irreverent gaiety of comment which he appreciated in his son Francis undoubtedly influenced him, not only contributing to the amusement of his later years, but adding gusto to his own conversation. With age the freedom of his tongue, heart, and intellect increased.

His personality made him more than an ex-Cabinet Minister and accomplished essayist. Without pomposity, he commanded that respect with which all officially important persons were treated in his youth ; and I can hardly imagine any of my contemporaries becoming as impressive as Mr. Birrell, however long they may live. I loved him for the great kindness he showed me, and through him I came to understand how " eminent Victorians " might be really eminent.

## SOUVENIRS D'UN TOURISTE

PARMI nous autres Anglais on pouvait, avant la guerre, constater une division d'opinions, selon laquelle notre sympathie allait plutôt à l'Allemagne ou à la France. Les intérêts, les régimes, les guerres, peuvent modifier ces sympathies, mais la division fondamentale subsiste, puisqu'elle est basée sur des différences de tempérament, voire parfois d'hérédité. Notre langue n'est-elle pas moitié allemande, moitié française ? Mais j'ai remarqué que les sentiments dont mes compatriotes sont animés envers les Français et envers les Allemands tendent à varier aussi selon leur connaissance des deux peuples. Ceux qui ne sont demeurés que peu de temps en France et en Allemagne préfèrent habitu-



ellement celle-ci ; mais plus on connaît les deux pays, plus on aime les Français et plus on se méfie des Allemands. Je n'ai visité la Mitteleuropa que sept ou huit fois et d'une façon superficielle, mais c'était assez pour surprendre sous une surface d'ordre et d'honnêteté le caractère habituellement hystérique des Allemands, qui les pousse à la méchanceté et au mensonge gratuit. Par contre, je connais la France du plus loin qu'il me souvienne, et chaque année n'a fait que rehausser mon affection. Et pour cause. Que les Français soient le plus intelligent, le plus artiste, le plus doué de savoir-vivre, des peuples modernes ne se discute guère. Mais on a pu entendre certaines personnes se plaindre de la frivolité ou de la malhonnêteté françaises. C'est que ces personnes ont passé un *week-end* à Paris (où ils ont visité les Folies-Bergère) ou une semaine sur la Côte d'Azur (ou dans une boîte de nuit ils ont payé très cher du très mauvais vin mousseux). Il faut dire que ces gens qui traitaient la France en maison de plaisir s'y conduisaient souvent d'une façon inexcusable. Quelquefois ils péchaient plutôt par ignorance que par grossièreté voulue. Ils n'ont pas su, par exemple, qu'on doit larder ses propos des mots "Madame" et "Monsieur"—usage aimable qui malheureusement a disparu d'ici depuis plus de cent ans. Des petites ignorances naissent les gros malentendus. D'autre part on peut admettre que le sans-gêne ou l'avarice myope de certains hôteliers, surtout dans le Midi, ont pu indisposer quelques voyageurs contre la France. J'aimerais parler ici de mes amis personnels en France, des peintres, des écrivains, des femmes du monde aussi, en lesquels j'ai trouvé une loyauté, une affection, et une générosité incomparables ; mais il peut être plus à propos et moins banal de rendre honneur à tout ce monde d'hôteliers, de restaurateurs, de garagistes, de domestiques, qui m'ont si chaleureusement accueilli dans des centaines de villes et de villages, et dont je garde le souvenir le plus amical.

Pendant mes voyages dans la province française—et j'en ai fait beaucoup—je crois n'avoir dû formuler une plainte que deux fois : c'était dans des hôtels plutôt prétentieux à Grenoble et à Montpellier. Parfois évidemment j'ai rencontré une certaine apathie, mais presque partout j'ai connu la courtoisie et le désir de plaire. Quoique des amis français m'aient raconté que la politesse allait décroissant en France, je l'ai trouvée même chez les chauffeurs de taxi, même chez les gendarmes, même—mais on ne me croira pas—dans les bureaux de poste. On dit les Français foncièrement xénophobes, je n'en crois rien. Au contraire, je suis certain que c'était en ma qualité d'Anglais que l'on m'a si bien accueilli.

Je veux donc me donner le plaisir de parler de quelques pays et villages dont je garde des souvenirs particulièrement affectueux. Exception faite pour la Bretagne et la Champagne, j'ai eu le bonheur de visiter toutes les provinces françaises de Bayeux à Menton, de Colmar à St-Jean-Pied-de-Port. En faisant mes projets de voyage je cherchais en premier lieu à visiter les musées, les églises romanes, et les monuments du dix-huitième siècle ; mais en allant d'un de ces objectifs à l'autre, que de surprises délicieuses m'attendaient ! Des châteaux sobres, des rivières élégiaques, des villages souriants où une auberge modeste offrait un fin dîner, un bon gîte et un accueil cordial. Il y a certaines splendeurs dont on n'a guère besoin de parler, les cathédrales de Chartres, de Beauvais, de Bourges, du Mans ; le Jardin de la Fontaine à Nîmes et la Place Stanislas à Nancy ; les Palais de Compiègne et d'Avignon ; l'Hospice de Beaune et la Grande Chartreuse ; les musées de Montpellier, de Grenoble, de Besançon, de Strasbourg, d'Albi, de Montauban, le musée Bonnat à Bayonne, le musée des tissus à Lyon, le musée des tapisseries à Angers. Du reste, maintenant que je ne peux plus prendre le *boat-train* ou survoler la Manche, ma pensée va plutôt à des sites moins célèbres. Je revois l'église de St-Jean-d'Angély, ruine de style baroque gracieusement revêtue de fleurs et d'arbustes, pareille à une gravure de Piranèse ; je revois la petite ville de Richelieu, bâtie d'un seul trait par le Cardinal ; les arcades et le vieux port de La Rochelle ; le marché d'Annecy, le Prytanée militaire de La Flèche, les châteaux de Bussy-Rabutin et de Brienne, et l'aile de Blois construite par Mansart ; les villages de Conques, de Moustiers-Ste-Marie, de St-Guilhem-le-Désert, de Brantôme ; les cathédrales de Paray-le-Monial et d'Autun ; les abbayes de Pontigny et de Moissac ; les églises de St-Savin, de St-Benoît-sur-Loire, d'Aulnay, de St-Bertrand-de-Comminges ; et deux groupes de petites églises romanes, l'une autour de Pons, l'autre près de Vendôme, dans la vallée exquise du Loir. Je pense aux fleuves de France, à la Dordogne, au Doubs, au Cher, au Lot (peut-être celui que j'aime le mieux), et à la Loire. J'avoue que je goûte peu les châteaux de la Renaissance, prototypes de nos *wedding-cakes*, construits par des architectes français qui baragouinaient l'italien ; mais qu'il était charmant de se promener sur les digues le long de la Loire en regardant les peupliers, les îlots, les javeaux, et le fleuve blond ensoleillé par un après-midi de printemps !

Quand pourrai-je retourner au pays basque, admirer sa végétation plantureuse et les rondeurs harmonieuses des vallonements pyrénéens ? Et dans ce beau pays, presque inconnu,

dans le Nord de l'Aveyron où l'on voit les ardoises des fermes nichées parmi les arbres composer une symphonie délicate en gris et vert ? Je me revois dans une barque sur les canaux du marais poitevin, où à défaut de routes les fermiers transportent les vaches et les foin dans des bateaux plats conduits à la perche, entre des prés si verts, si luxuriants, qu'on s'attend à y voir la Lady of Shalott de Tennyson.

Quelle richesse, quelle variété, en France ! Partout on tombe sur des monuments inattendus, des sites étranges. Je pense au Cirque de Gavarnie, aux gorges du Tarn et du Verdon, au paysage surréaliste du Puy, à la route construite au fond de la mer qui mène à marée basse à Noirmoutier, au Gouffre de Padirac d'où l'on glisse sur un pale ruisseau souterrain jusqu'à un antre colossal—phénomène qui par ouï-dire peut sembler vulgaire, mais qui dans le fait est impressionnant comme un rêve de poète romantique. Encore plus émouvantes sont les grottes paléolithiques des Eyzies, et surtout celle de Cabrerets où, sous des peintures de fauves, se voit l'empreinte du pied d'une femme préhistorique, aussi fraîche que si elle datait d'hier. Il n'est pas fortuit, je crois, que presque toute la peinture paléolithique d'Europe se trouve en France, pays où l'étalage le plus humble, le plus rustique, montre un bon goût issu d'une tradition plus que séculaire.

En voyant les beautés diverses du paysage français, qui s'étonnera que les habitants aient de tout temps su exceller à tous les arts visuels ? On peut trouver des analogies entre les styles français et les paysages : les hautes plaines de la Normandie, les clairières de l'Île-de-France, les montagnes tordues de l'Auvergne, les campagnes accidentées du Béarn, les rivières capricieuses du Quercy, la noblesse classique du pays aixois, ne sont-elles pas reflétées tant dans l'architecture que dans la peinture françaises ?

Enfin, dans mes souvenirs de touriste je retrouve les figures aimables de ceux qui, avec tant de bonté spontanée et de désintéressement, ont facilité mes voyages. Je me rappelle des gens avec qui j'ai eu un brin de conversation, des gens restés anonymes pour moi mais dont la gentillesse était bien personnelle, le curé de Germigny-des-Prés, par exemple, et le gardien du château de Castelnau de Bretenoux, le facteur de Dunières dans la Haute-Loire, un cycliste en tandem et sa compagne avec qui j'ai causé au Bugue. De telles rencontres sont parmi les grands plaisirs d'un voyage en France. Et surtout je me souviens de certains aubergistes dont l'amabilité a été particulièrement remarquable—des deux hôteses de Gennevilliers sur la Loire, des

hôtes de Chavoire sur le lac d'Annecy, de Fresselines dans la Creuse, de Coulonges-sur-l'Autize et de St-Ouen-sous-Bailly près de Dieppe, des hôtes de Semblançay en Touraine, de Barbazan près de St-Gaudens, de Garabit, à côté de ce viaduc qui est un des rares chefs-d'œuvre de l'architecture du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, et de l'hôtesse de Sauveterre, village charmant perché au-dessus du Gave d'Oloron. Celle-ci savait chanter aussi bien que préparer les sauces—peut-elle, je me le demande—peut-elle chanter aujourd'hui ? Et maintes et maintes fois je pense à mes amis M. et Mme Couderc, à Souillac, qui me recevaient toujours avec tant d'empressement, qui m'ont aidé par leurs conseils à connaître ce beau pays de la Dordogne que j'aime tant—et que j'ai quittés, le cœur gros, trois jours avant la guerre.

Quand donc la nuit, avant de m'endormir, je refais en imagination mes voyages, quand je pense au bonheur qu'on trouvait sur les rives de ces fleuves enchanteurs, quand je constate à quel point la France me manque, je me demande comment les Français qui sont en Angleterre peuvent supporter cet exil. Les Anglais ont l'habitude de vivre à l'étranger—souvent même nous le préférons. Mais vous autres Français qui continuez la lutte ici, qu'il doit vous en coûter ! Des villages aussi souriants que ceux que j'ai nommés sont pour vous des mères ; vous avez reçu le baptême dans ces églises romanes, et vous vous êtes baignés, enfants, dans ces rivières ensoleillées. Il n'y a pas de mots pour décrire votre malheur et votre fermeté.